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# Lust and lore : the opposition of Caritas and Cupiditas as a controlling theme in John Gower's Confessio amantis.

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# LUST AND LORE: THE OPPOSITION OF *CARITAS* AND *CUPIDITAS* AS A CONTROLLING THEME IN JOHN GOWER'S *CONFESSIO AMANTIS*

BY

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ABSTRACT

John Gower, Chaucer's contemporary and friend, has not received the critical attention he deserves, although in both output and literary quality he ranks as one of the major poets of the late fourteenth century. This neglect is due in part to the continual comparison between his work and Chaucer's, in which Chaucer always comes out the winner, and in part to the moralizing tone that pervades all his writings. This thesis, dealing almost exclusively with the Confessio Amantis as a unified work of art, attempts to rectify this state of comparative neglect by providing an analysis of the implications of the poem's major theme, love and its various meanings.

The controlling theme of the poem is the ambiguity inherent in the word "love". Two primary distinctions are made: love may be directed away from the self toward an appreciation of God and one's fellow man for the sake of God, or it may be directed toward self-aggrandizement at the expense of one's neighbour and God. The first direction is caritas, the second cupiditas, or covetousness. The terms and definitions are taken from St. Augustine's De doctrina christiana, and find their ultimate origin in the New Testament.

C.S. Lewis and John H. Fisher represent the opposite poles of interpretation. Lewis, in The Allegory of Love, was the first twentieth-century scholar to praise Gower with virtually no reservations. He lauds the "beauties of the architectonics" of the Confessio Amantis, Gower's highly developed narrative skill, and his writing style. For Lewis the most significant element of the poem is the love allegory comprising Books I to VIII. The Prologue and the Epilogue, where Gower's moralizing is most clearly evident, are devices moving the reader from the ordinary world to that of the allegory, and back again when the poem is completed.

Fisher, in his John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer, approaches Gower from the viewpoint of his moral and political philosophy. According to Fisher his moral views, as found in the Prologue and Epilogue, and in the digression on political philosophy in Book VII, are the most important part of the poem, and the love allegory is peripheral, existing to shed light on the ordinary world. In his thematic analysis of Gower's writings Fisher discusses the three major poems as a single work, guided by one developing moral theme.

My approach to the Confessio Amantis attempts to reconcile the opposing interpretations of the poem as a love allegory and as a political treatise. Chapter I briefly discusses the main trends in Gower criticism. Chapter II provides an analysis of the Prologue and the

Epilogue in terms of the opposing moral values of caritas and cupiditas. In the Prologue Gower compares the present time with a former golden age; he finds the present sadly lacking in love, which he identifies as charity. The past, on the other hand, had charity as its guiding moral principle, resulting in harmony, while the presence of cupiditas in the present has resulted in discord. Gower completes the discussion in the Epilogue, where he urges the social classes of the present to follow the law of charity and reason instead of the way of covetousness.

The Prologue and Epilogue form the moral framework for the lover's confession. Chapter III examines the opposing values of caritas and cupiditas as found in the love allegory. Genius, the priest of Venus, represents a reasonable and moderate viewpoint in all matters, including love. Amans, on the other hand, seeks for sexual satisfaction within the context of Venus' court, itself a metaphor for unbridled passion. Amans' quest is represented in terms of will uncontrolled by reason, while Genius' opposition is guided by the primacy of the reason over the will. The love that forms the main theme of the allegory describes in the first place the love between a man and a woman. This relationship is turned into an exemplum for a more enduring love, in which the choice between cupiditas, represented by Amans' goal, and caritas, as seen in Genius' replies, forms the controlling theme.

Chapter IV takes Gower's moral stand, expressed in

the Prologue and Epilogue, and exemplified in the opposition of Amans and Genius, and applies it to some of the tales forming the exempla for the seven cardinal sins and their branches. The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to give a literary appreciation of Gower's story-telling, and to demonstrate that his moral outlook determines the manner in which he shapes his exempla to fit the immediate context. Each exemplum is placed between a formulaic introduction and conclusion, in which the moral and didactic lesson is explained. The tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, based on Ovid's Metamorphoses, clearly shows how Gower changes his sources to suit the tale to the context. The final part of Chapter IV examines the digression on political philosophy in Book VII, to demonstrate that it forms an integral part of the whole poem.

The thesis is meant to demonstrate several things about Gower's writing: that there is a thematic unity in the diversity of the Confessio Amantis; that Gower's moral standards and didactic purpose give shape to the poem; that Lewis' praise of Gower is justified; and finally it demonstrates that Gower balances a moral tone with deftly controlled artistry.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Another study of John Gower's Confessio Amantis[1] hardly needs justification. Heinrich Spies' judgment[2] in 1900 that Chaucer's contemporary and friend had been treated in a stepmotherly fashion by critics (Spies, 161-162) is no longer completely true. Since C.S. Lewis' pioneering appreciation of the Confessio Amantis in The Allegory of Love[3] a steady trickle of articles, books, and doctoral dissertations has found its way into the public eye.[4]

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1 All references to the Confessio Amantis are taken from the edition by G.C. Macaulay, The English Works of John Gower, E.E.T.S., E.S. Nos. 81 and 82 (London: Oxford, 1900-1901, repr. 1969). References to Macaulay's introduction and notes are cited as Works, with volume and page number.

2 "Bisherige Ergebnisse und Weitere Aufgaben der Gower-Forschung," Englische Studien, XXVIII (1900), 161-208. Professor Spies' weitere Aufgaben consist of a close examination and collation of all known MSS of the Confessio Amantis, and the production of a critical edition of all of Gower's works. He offers criticism of earlier editions, and of Macaulay's (at that time) projected edition, and discusses manuscript relations, as a prolegomena to a critical edition based on sound philological principles.

3 (London: Oxford, 1936, repr. 1973); hereafter cited as Lewis.

4 A virtually complete bibliography is given in Götz Schmitz, 'The Middel Weie": Stil- und Aufbauformen in John

Yet most studies devoted to Gower have concentrated on one of two things: an elucidation of the place he occupies with reference to political and social events of the late fourteenth century, or an appreciation of his narrative art. With the exception of an article by Peter Fison[5] and recent monographs by Götz Schmitz and Patrick J. Gallacher[6], these have been the primary *foci* of Gower studies, and an evaluation of the literary qualities of the *Confessio Amantis* remains a *desideratum*.[7]

Gower produced three major works during his lifetime, according to the colophon appearing in nearly all of the manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*.[8] The first, known variously as the *Speculum Meditantis*, the *Speculum Hominis*, and by its French title, the *Mirour de l'Omme*, was written

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*Gowers Confessio Amantis* (Köln, 1974), pp. 272-294. John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (London: Methuen, 1965), (hereafter cited as Fisher), notes (p. xiv) that he is engaged in revising the Gower section of J.H. Wells, *A Manual of Writings in Middle English* for the Connecticut Academy of Sciences and the Modern Languages Association, but to date this project has not been completed.

5 "The Poet in John Gower", *Essays in Criticism*, VIII (1958), 16-26.

6 *Love, the Word, and Mercury* (Albuquerque, N.M.: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1975).

7 Cf. Walter F. Schirmer, Review of Fisher, *Anglia*, LXXXIII (1965), 356: "Da das Fishersche Buch die grosse Erzählkunst Gowers so ganz im Hintergrund lässt bleibt trotz mancher Verdienste der vorliegenden Studie eine Monographie über den Dichter Gower nach wie vor ein Desideratum."

8 *Works*; II, 479-80). Cf. Macaulay's note, *ibid*. II,550.

in Anglo-Norman during the 1370's. It describes in great detail the various vices and virtues, and then shows how society has been corrupted by the power of the vices.[9] The second major poem is the Vox Clamantis, written in Latin about the time of the Wat Tyler rebellion in 1381.[10] It begins with an allegorical description of the rebellion, probably written later than the rest of the poem. The remainder is devoted to a description of the sins rampant in the three estates of society: the clergy, the nobility, and the peasantry.

The Confessio Amantis was composed in English during the 1380's and probably completed in 1396. Written in rhyming octosyllabic couplets, it consists of a Prologue, followed by the confession of an unhappy lover to Genius, a priest of Venus. The confession takes the form of a long exposition of the seven cardinal sins, and their various branches, each branch illustrated by one or more tales drawn from a variety of sources. A short epilogue concludes the poem, in which Gower reiterates the subject matter and theme of the Prologue.

A major critical problem is the question of the

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9 The Mirour may be found in The Complete Works of John Gower, ed. G.C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899; repr. Grosse Point, Mich.: Scholarly Press, 1968), vol. I.

10 The Vox Clamantis was edited by Macaulay in The Complete Works (Oxford, 1902), vol. IV. There is an excellent prose translation by Eric Stockton, The Major Latin Works of John Gower (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1962).

coherence between the Prologue and the Epilogue, and the main portion of the poem. In the Prologue Gower details the evils of society, drawing a picture similar to that in the Vox Clamantis. Book I of the poem begins with the lover wandering into the forest to weep over his misfortunes in love. There he has a vision of Cupid and Venus, who appear to him in royal splendour. He makes his complaint to them, and asks Venus for some reward for his many years of fruitless labour in her court. She orders him to shrive himself and calls for Genius, her priest, to perform this task. There seems to be little connection between the content of the Prologue and that of the poem proper. In the one he criticizes society, while the poem itself, with its fanciful love allegory, seems to be far removed from society.

A similar problem confronts the reader with the digressions on religions of the world in Book V, and with the political discussion of Book VII. Here, more than anywhere else in the Confessio Amantis, Gower seems to be departing unnecessarily from the main thrust of the lover's confession, although each digression has its source in a question Amans asks of Genius. A further extension of this problem is Gower's use of exempla that have nothing to do with love, the main subject matter of the confession.

Macaulay pointed out some of these problems in the introduction to his edition in a highly condemnatory fashion. Of the Prologue he says:

> . . . the author did not resist the temptation to express his view on society in a Prologue which is by no means sufficiently connected with the general scheme of the poem, though it is in part a protest against division and discord, that is to say, lack of love.
>
> (Works, I, xix)

The departure from the main scheme in Book VII is, in his view, still worse than the Prologue, a "second political pamphlet . . . intended to some extent as an admonition of the author's royal patron" (Works, I, xx). He calls the account of the religions "absolutely unnecessary" and the priest's unfavourable account of the manner in which Venus and Cupid came to be called the gods of love, "the highest pitch of absurdity."[11] Macaulay makes almost no attempt to reconcile these "serious faults" as he calls them, and lets them stand as they are. Elsewhere in his introduction he speaks of some faults that may be found when the work is examined with close attention to detail, but such major faults as those he describes here are worthy of some attention, especially when it is considered that Gower wrote the Confessio Amantis over a long period of time, and found it necessary and desirable to revise it at least three times, an indication of the care he lavished on the work, and of the control he exercised.

C.S. Lewis and John H. Fisher represent the two main critical approaches having a bearing on this problem.

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11 Works, I, xx. Cf. Macaulay's note to V.729 ff., Works, I, 515, where he calls it a "very ill-advised digression."

Lewis sees the Confessio Amantis as an exposition of an amatory ethic, represented by the code of courtly love as it is expounded by Andreas Capellanus (Lewis, p. 199). Gower's main intent was to "combine 'profit with delight'." According to Lewis, delight "almost inevitably meant courtly love, and 'lore' would . . . include both ethical diatribe and information. . . . The work is to be moral, yet also encyclopedic, and the whole is to be given a courtly and amatory colouring" (Lewis, p. 198). The Prologue and Epilogue are to "serve as transitions between the world of courtly love and that of the ordinary world which the reader is living in before he begins to read and to which he returns again when he has finished the book" (Lewis, p. 200). Lewis thus with one stroke dismisses the problem, although he is forced to do so at least partly by the exigencies of the subject of his book. He reveals his bias when he says of the Epilogue that it is a "long and unsuccessful coda" (Lewis, pp. 221-222). He would have had Gower end the poem after Venus has for all time excluded the lover from her court.

While Lewis places strong emphasis on the love allegory as the primary subject matter of the Confessio Amantis, Fisher takes a diametrically opposed point of view. His book is a serious attempt to place Gower in the proper relationship to his time, and to discover all that can be known of his relationship, both personal and literary, with his friend Chaucer. He views the three major works as part

of a single work:

> The most striking characteristic of Gower's literary productions is its single-mindedness. The similarity in the method, structure, and content of his major pieces . . . is the outgrowth of an inner consistency in purpose and point of view. In a very real sense Gower's three major poems are one continuous work.
>
> (Fisher, p. 135)

The whole chapter on "Major Themes" is devoted to showing the interrelationships between the three poems. The major theme is the completion of a "sin-law-love" pattern, begun in the Mirour, and completed in the Confessio Amantis. Fisher does not deny that the matter of the poem is courtly love, or that one of its purposes was "to bring together a collection of stories for the delectation of an aristocratic audience" (Fisher, p. 187), but the main problem as he sees it is to determine "how legal and political preoccupation molded Gower's treatment of his material in this piece" (Fisher, p. 187). To this he adds:

> . . . the moralistic comment which Professor Lewis took as peripheral is central, the allegory of love which he took as central is peripheral. The allegory and the final palinode of "love cured by age" are very nearly as moving as Lewis's eloquent exposition makes them out to be. Yet his misgivings that he was giving the allegory a more conceptual form than is justified by the text is well founded. For it is clearly the Prologue and the moral digressions that are the heart of Gower's matter.
>
> (Fisher, p. 191, italics added)

Fisher approaches the Confessio Amantis from a dual standpoint: first, in terms of its relationship with the Mirour and the Vox Clamantis, and secondly from the stand that

Gower's moral outlook colours all of his writings. To this end Fisher subordinates the love allegory of the lover's confession to the moral and didactic portions of the poem.

The content of both the Mirour and the Vox Clamantis is clearly moral and didactic, but this is not completely the case with the Confessio Amantis. As Macaulay pointed out in his introduction, there are three particular areas of merit in the poem: the first is Gower's unquestionable talent for story-telling (Works, I, xii); the second is the attractiveness of the setting for the tales: both the lover and the (unseen) lady present some very attractive characteristics (Works, I, xiv); the third and "perhaps most remarkable" is the form of expression (Works, I, xvi). All of these areas revolve around Gower's skill as a narrative poet, a skill which in recent years has received some attention.[12]

Lewis and Fisher represent opposite points of view in their interpretations of the Confessio Amantis. A more satisfactory point of view, taking into account both Gower's moral concern and his narrative skill, probably

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12 First discussed at length by Lewis, pp. 201-208; for some recent studies on Gower's narrative art see Maria Wickert, Studien zu John Gower (Cologne, 1953), pp. 174-204; Derek Pearsall, "Gower's Narrative Art," PMLA, LXXXI (1966), 475-483; Arno Esch, "John Gowers Erzählkunst," in Chaucer und seine Zeit: Symposion für Walter F. Schirmer, ed. Arno Esch (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 1968), pp. 207-239.

stands half-way between them. By his own admission Gower writes to advise the "wyse man" (Prol. 62-65), but since too much wisdom at one time dulls the mind, he proposes to

> . . . . . go the middel weie
> And wryte a bok betwen the tweie,
> Somwhat of lust, somewhat of lore,
> (Prol. 17-19)

so that what he writes may be appreciated by every man that reads it. C.S. Lewis glosses 'lust' as "delight" (Lewis, p. 198), but Gower more often uses the word to indicate strong sexual desire. In Book V, when Genius is describing how Cupid and Venus came to be called the gods of love, he uses 'lust' to indicate Venus' unrestrained sexual appetite for men, and to describe her incestuous relationship with her father and her son Cupid. The 'lust' he proposes to write about is more than the mere delight of a well-told tale or the titillating delight of the adulterous courtly love story. The whole of Amans' quest for some form of satisfaction within the court of Venus is expressed in terms of his desire for sexual satisfaction from his lady, although the quest is cloaked in the conventions of courtly love. He tries to sublimate his desire by taking delight in contemplating her physical beauty, or by trying to be satisfied with merely spending some time near her, but his ultimate goal is to experience the delight of an actual consummation of his love for her.

Amans' unrestrained desire for his lady is opposed at

every point by the reasonable rejoinders of Genius. The priest gradually unfolds the seven cardinal sins to the lover, bringing forward one example after another, not only to illustrate the particular sin under discussion, but also to teach Amans that his desire for satisfaction is unreasonable and sinful. The main theme of the Confessio Amantis is love, in all its various permutations, and Genius devotes much of his time to an exposition of the sins in their relationship to love. Many of his tales, however, have no apparent connection with the main theme, but illustrate the nature of the sins in other areas of life, such as politics or personal behaviour. All this encyclopedic knowledge is set in the context of the dialogue between Amans and Genius,[13] whose primary focus is love. In their discussion two main aspects of love are presented. Amans, with his unceasing quest for sexual satisfaction, represents 'lust'. This is ultimately seen as the basic problem not only in his quest for reward in Venus' court, but also as the foundation for all sin. In this sense it is directly related to cupiditas, defined by St. Paul as the root of all evil. Opposed to this love

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13 Cf. Donald Schueler, "Some Comments on the Structure of John Gower's Confessio Amantis," in Explorations of Literature, ed. Rima D. Reck (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), pp. 15-24. He places a strong emphasis on the characterization of the confession as "dialogue," and explains the seeming irregularities of structure and balance as caused by the natural variety of the dialogue.

led by the will is that represented by Genius, with its emphasis on reason and moderation in all things, not merely the relation between man and woman, but also in other, more mundane matters. Genius' reasonable approach in love is akin to caritas, the chief of the theological virtues. His primary objective, as directed by Venus, consists first of instructing Amans in the nature of love. More importantly, however, he weans Amans from the cupidinous love represented by Venus and her court, and points the way to caritas as the most desirable goal for a man's life. This is made explicit at the end of Book VIII, when he points out the sinful nature of Amans' quest, and directs him to a more permanent, reason-controlled love, a road which Amans, after some initial hesitation, decides to follow, but not until Venus has explicitly barred him from her court. The poem ends with a description of earthly love, followed by its renunciation, and a clear affirmation of Amans' new orientation toward heavenly love.

The dual nature of love, the one issuing from the will, the other controlled by reason, forms the main theme of the confession proper. The dialogue between Amans and Genius forms the dramatic framework for the discussion of love and for the tales. The same theme that controls the confession lies at the centre of the outer framework of Prologue and Epilogue. Here the main theme is the division existing in the world, presented by means of a

contrast between a former golden age, and the present world. Gower identifies the source of division in church, state and individual in the present as a lack of love, and the presence of selfish covetousness. By contrast the former age possessed harmony, which has its source in charity. The love allegory, as Fisher observes, "exists for the light it throws on the ordinary world" presented in the Prologue (Fisher, p. 187); it should be added that the Prologue also illuminates the love allegory. It forms, with the Epilogue, a moral framework for the poem itself. The theme of division rooted in cupiditas, contrasted with harmony based on the practice of caritas, finds an echo in the dual nature of love found in the confession, and gives unity to the diversity presented there.

Gower reached the pinnacle of his artistic achievement with the Confessio Amantis. The ills of society remains his primary concern, but the nearly unrelieved moral and didactic comments of the Mirour and the Vox Clamantis are now tempered by the judicious blend of straightforward social commentary with a love allegory, a fitting choice for presenting the theme of love gone astray, though for a different reason than that presented by C.S. Lewis.

The present study focuses on three distinct areas of the Confessio Amantis: the moral framework of the Prologue and Epilogue; the dramatic framework of the lover's confession which constitutes the main part of the poem; and the operation of Gower's moral outlook at the level of

individual tales. The first chapter discusses the theme of the dual nature of love as Gower presented it in the Prologue and Epilogue through the contrast of the golden age and the present. The second chapter examines in some detail how this theme operates in the dialogue between Amans and Genius. Amans' quest has the fulfillment of his sexual desires as its goal, and represents the control of reason by the will. Genius, on the other hand, offers caritas, exemplified by the control of the will by reason, in opposition to Amans' quest. The final chapter shows how this bifurcation of moral direction is a controlling factor in the manner in which Gower alters his sources.

The whole study is intended to show a definite continuity between the moral matters of the Prologue and the love allegory of the poem itself, and to give some indication of the integrity of the work through an examination of the way Gower's moral theme determines the unity of his literary creation. This is not to deny that there are serious faults in the Confessio Amantis. Gower is not a writer of Chaucer's stature, and any comparison between the two will usually give the laurel to the latter. Gower shows great care in his handling of his theme, however, and at times surpasses Chaucer in his craftsmanship. It was no mean achievement to maintain rhymed octosyllabic couplets for more than thirty-five thousand lines without failing to keep the reader's interest, and to give unity to such a diversity and vast amount of material through the

use of a major controlling theme. Gower must be considered as one of the major poets of the age of Richard II, along with Chaucer, Langland and the Gawain poet.[14]

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14 Cf. J.A. Burrow, Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland and the Gawain Poet (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), who considers common elements of style, theme, and social concerns which characterize them as representatives of the same age.

## CHAPTER II

## THE MORAL FRAMEWORK

The Prologue and Epilogue of the Confessio Amantis pose a problem concerning the unity of the poem. In the Prologue Gower discusses at length the problems he has observed in society. The poem proper begins in Book I with an introduction of the love allegory, and does not return to the social concerns of the Prologue until the very end of Book VIII. The divergence between the subject matter of the Prologue and the poem is intensified by Gower's own statement:

> Whan the prologe is so despended
> This bok schal afterward ben ended
> Of love, . . . (Prol. 73-75).

When he has completed his discussion of the Prologue, he will leave that matter and devote the remainder of the book to love. This suggests that he is dealing with two distinct subjects, the one in the Prologue, the other in what follows. He will leave the subject discussed in the Prologue and treat of love in the book which follows.

The problem is compounded by the discrepancy between his stated intentions for the poem in the Prologue, and those at the beginning of Book I. At the opening of the Prologue he writes:

> Thus I, which am a burel clerk,
> Purpose forto wryte a bok
> After the world that whilom tok
> Long tyme in olde daies passed;
> Bot for men sein it is now lassed,
> In worse plit than it was tho,
> I thenke forto touche also
> The world which neweth every dai,
> So as I can, so as I mai.
> (Prol. 52-60)

He clearly intends to write a book about the world as it existed long ago, and about the present world, which he finds in worse condition than former times. The 'bok' which he plans to write will deal with his observations of that world.

He describes the Prologue and its intended audience a few lines further:

> For this prologe is so assised
> That it to wisdom al belongeth:
> What wysman that it underfongeth,
> He schal drawe into remembrance
> The fortune of this worldes chance,
> The which noman in his persone
> Mai knowe, bot the god al one.
> (Prol. 66-72)

The Prologue will deal with matters of wisdom, intended for the wise man. The man wise enough to understand what he writes will be moved to consider the exigencies of fortune in the world. This idea is in keeping with the medieval conception of the purposes of poetry. Boccaccio, for example, describing the nature of poetry in Book XIV of the Genealogia Deorum Gentilium,[1] says that poetry conveys a deeper

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[1] Translated Charles O. Osgood, Boccaccio on Poetry (New York, 1956), p. 48.

message. Those who have the key to its understanding derive benefits from the art; those that do not scoff at it.

Gower's stated intentions for the Prologue are at variance with the subject of the poem itself. At the beginning of Book I he describes his sense of failure at not solving the problems raised by his earlier work, and indicates what he will now write about:

> Forthi the Stile of my writinges
> Fro this day forth I thenke change
> And speke of thing is noght so strange,
> Which every kinde hath upon honde,
> And wherupon the world mot stonde,
> And hath don sithen it began,
> And schal whil ther is any man;
> And that is love, of which I mene
> To trete, as after schal be sene.
> (I. 8-16)

His intention is clearly to deal with love, a subject familiar to all creatures. Gower argues that love forms the foundation for the world. The introduction of the love allegory in Book I further heightens the impression that there is a divergence between the contents of the Prologue and that of the poem.

The key to the solution lies in the Prologue. Derek Pearsall, at the beginning of his article on Gower's narrative art, says of the Prologue:

> . . . the Prologue functions . . . in two ways: in the first place, by developing as its principal theme the idea that division is the source of all evil, it prepares the way for the transition to love. . . . In the second place, the Prologue provides the basic moral frame in which the picture of love is to be held steady.
> (Pearsall, p. 476)

Pearsall does not develop the idea any further and fails to

discuss the opposite of division, since his major concern is to give an assessment of Gower's narrative art. The central theme of the Prologue is the division existing within man, among men, in the church, and between nations, contrasted with the harmony present in former times. Gower identifies the source of division in the world as "covoitise", and the source of harmony as charity. By contrasting the past with the present he effectively sets up a thematic opposition between the two loves, caritas and cupiditas, expressed through the antinomies of love and hate among men, peace of mind and insecurity within man, concern for heavenly rewards and for worldly possessions among the clergy, and peace and war among nations.

Gower restates this theme after completing the love allegory in Book VIII, where he returns once more to the social considerations of the Prologue, but now his discussion is illuminated by a full awareness of the necessity of caritas for harmony. The Prologue and Epilogue, taken together, form a moral framework[2] for the lover's confession. Love, as it exists between man and woman, or as a moral principle to guide man on the way to heaven or hell, is the theme providing continuity between the Prologue and the confession.

Gower in essence shaped his poem with a dual framework

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2 Cf. Pearsall, p. 476; cf. also Götz Schmitz, 'The Middel Weie', p. 59: ". . . die längeren Teilen des Prologs korrespondieren mit kurzen . . . Teilen im Epilog . . . und legen so ein festes Band um das Gesamtwerk."

possessing a unifying theme: a moral statement in the Prologue and the Epilogue, with the 'wysman' as its intended audience, and the duality of love as its theme; and the lover's confession, consisting of Amans' fruitless quest for satisfaction in love, contrasted with Genius' attempts to guide him away from his quest toward a knowledge of caritas, using tales to illustrate the seven cardinal sins. The principle of the opposition becomes the thematic point of departure unifying the two frameworks.

The dual choice in love open to men is characterized by St. Augustine as a choice between caritas and cupiditas. In his De doctrina christiana[3] he defines and summarizes the two, making them in effect antithetical principles:

> Caritatem uoco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum; cupiditatem autem motum animi ad fruendum se et proximo et quolibet corpore non propter deum.[4]

Cupiditas as the root of sin had as its strongest Biblical support the often quoted verse, Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas.[5] Chaucer's Pardoner, for example, uses it as

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3 Ed. Ioseph Martin, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnholt, 1957), XXXII, 1-167.

4 III, x (16): "I call 'charity' the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self for the sake of God; but 'cupidity' is a motion of the soul toward enjoyment of one's self, one's neighbour, or any corporeal thing for the sake of something other than God." Translated by D.W. Robertson, Jr., On Christian Doctrine (new York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958), p. 88.

5 I Tim. 6:10 (Doway-Rheims): "Covetousness is the

the text for his sermon in the Canterbury Tales.[6] Its position as chief of the deadly sins was at times disputed in the Middle Ages, generally giving way to pride, or superbia.[7] Augustine, however, describes cupiditas as the root, if not the chief of all sin. At the same time, caritas is the highest virtue, a position virtually undisputed in medieval thought. Augustine wrote of this: Quomodo enim radix omnium malorum cupiditas, sic radix omnium bonorum caritas est.[8] In this he extends the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: "And now remain faith, hope, charity: these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (I Cor. 13:13).

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root of all evils." Cf. Gower's marginal note at the beginning of Book V: "Hic in quinto libro intendit Confessor tractare de Auaricia, que omnium malorum radix dicitur" (V. 8 marg.). All translations from the Bible follow the Doway-Rheims version, which is based on the Latin Vulgate.

6 The Canterbury Tales, ed. F.N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), VI (C) 334, p. 148.

7 Cf. Morton W. Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1947), pp. 74-76, and passim for a description of the "struggle". He cites inter alia Isidore of Seville, Moralia super Job, XIV, 53, for a discussion of the relative positions of cupiditas and superbia. Bloomfield discusses Gower's use of the seven cardinal sins on pp. 193-196.

8 Enarrationes in Psalmos, ed. D. Eligivs Dekkers, O.S.B. and Iohannes Fraipont, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina (Turnhout, 1956), XC, s. I, 8: "For just as cupidity is the root of all evil, charity is the root of all good." For further discussion on the two kinds of love see Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953).

Gower presents a similar bifurcation of love in the Prologue to the Confessio Amantis. The cause of all the confusion in the world is division. In the secular world a lack of love for man and a love for earthly possessions lie at the root of the division. In the realm of the church, neglect of the law of charity and a predilection for earthly goods and honour have led to the corruption of the clergy. To use Augustine's words, cupiditas is the cause of division, which reveals itself in the lack of peace in the world; caritas is the source of harmony, revealed in the presence of peace and the practise of justice and mercy.[9] Gower dramatizes this opposition in the Prologue through the comparison of a past when caritas ruled to a present in which cupiditas has the upper hand.

Critics have looked at the Prologue in a variety of ways. Some have for all practical purposes ignored it and have concentrated their efforts on the lover's confession, or on Gower's narrative art.[10] Others, not wishing to

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9 Cf. D.W. Robertson Jr., "The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens," Speculum, XXVI (1951), 24: "These two loves, Charity and Cupidity, are the two poles of the mediaeval Christian scale of values." Professor Robertson later modified this idea, in A Preface to Chaucer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1963) pp. 27 ff., pointing out that they are not mutually exclusive principles in a Manichean sense, but hierarchically related, with caritas in a metaphysical ascendance over cupiditas.

10 See, for example, Lewis, passim; Derek Pearsall, "Gower's Narrative Art," PMLA, LXXXI (1966), 475-84; Arno Esch, "Gowers Erzählkunst," in Chaucer und seine Zeit, ed. Arno Esch (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1968), pp. 207-259.

ignore it, have lessened the importance and impact of the confession and concentrated on the political and moral aspects of Gower's writing. George R. Coffman initiated the latter phase of criticism, suggesting "that the social instead of the literary aspects of Gower's writings may form the base for an interpretation of him in his most significant role."[11] To this he adds an eloquent statement for the interpretation of Gower as social critic and moralist:

> The age in which he lived, frustrated in its onward march just a few years before his death, is a tremendously exciting one. And more than any other single writer he mirrors directly the whole social range of that cosmic and chaotic period — albeit with a somewhat myopic vision. In a large and significant sense it may be more important to study him as a recipient of the heritage of certain ideas which he adapts to a functional end than as a writer who assimilates his materials for the purposes of literary art. And possibly even his poetry may assume greater validity and vitality if we consider his work as a whole rather than as fragmentary bits. (Coffman, p. 52)

Coffman's words are the most eloquent statement for this approach. In his words, the singleminded "guiding principle" that is to be found throughout his major French, Latin, and English works "indicates that he was rightly called the

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11 "John Gower in His Most Significant Role," University of Colorado Studies, Series B (Studies in Humanities), I, iv (1945), 52.

See also Edwart Weber, John Gower: Dichter einer ethisch-politischen Reformation (Bad Homburg, W. Germany, 1965) and idem, John Gower: Zur literarischen Form seiner Dichtung (Bad Homburg, 1966); Weber's studies are an attempt to examine Gower's moral philosophy in terms of the scholastic interpretation of Aristotelian and Platonic thought.

moral Gower" (Coffman, p. 53). This approach to his writings was followed by Maria Wickert,[12] and by Coffman in another article,[13] and culminated in the perceptive study by John Fisher, who consciously followed the direction indicated by his predecessors.[14] Although this approach has shed much light on Gower and his political and personal affiliations, as well as on his role in the society of the fourteenth century, it fails to come to grips with the basic problem, which is how to reconcile the apparent dichotomy between the political and socio-ethical teachings of the Prologue with the subject matter as it is outlined at the start of Book I.

The approach to Gower as a moralist fails to do justice to his ability to compose a coherent and integrated work of art. C.S. Lewis has come closest to exposing what he called the "beauty of the architectonics" (Lewis, p. 203) of the Confessio Amantis. Donald Schueler tried to explain the "digressions" as a natural consequence of the dialogue between the lover and his confessor, adding "The structure of his work depended . . . on whatever

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12 Cf. p. 8, n. 12 above. Her study deals primarily with the Vox Clamantis, and only in the last chapter with the Confessio Amantis.

13 "John Gower: Mentor for Royalty," PMLA, LXIX (1954), 953-964.

14 Cf. Fisher, p. vi. His monograph was preceded by a study on the life records of Gower. See John H. Fisher, "A Calendar of Documents Relating to the Life of John Gower the Poet," JEGP, LVIII (1959), 1-23.

naturalness he was able to inject into the conversation and the characters of his two speakers" (Schueler, p. 17). This approach takes care of the digressions in the confession, but not of the discrepancy between the Prologue and Gower's stated intentions there, and the opening of the poem proper and his purpose as he describes it.

Many students of Gower's writings have assumed that the lover's confession forms the basic framework of the Confessio Amantis. Thomas Warton in his History of English Poetry,[15] for example, states categorically:

> This poem, which bears no immediate references to the other two divisions,[16] is a dialogue between a lover and his confessor, who is a priest of Venus, and, like the mystagogue in the Picture of Cebes, is called Genius. Here, as if it had been impossible for a lover not to be a good catholic, the ritual of religion is applied to the tender passion, and Ovid's Art of Love is blended with the breviary.

Warton makes no reference to the Prologue of the poem, although in his analysis of Gower's sources he gives a description of the political philosophy in Book VII. Reinhold Pauli, in the preface to his edition, merely echoes Warton.[17]

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15 (London, 1778), II, 3. Henry J. Todd, in the Preface to Illustrations of the Lives and Writings of Gower and Chaucer (London, 1810), p. xxiv, quotes Warton's summary for the benefit "of some readers of this volume who may yet be unacquainted with the subject of the Confessio Amantis."

16 That is, to the Speculum Meditantis and to the Vox Clamantis.

17 The Confessio Amantis of John Gower, Edited and

Macaulay, in the introduction to his edition, places great emphasis on Gower's ability as a story-teller (Works, I, xii-xvi) and on his technical skill in using the English language (Works, I, xvi-xix). He writes further:

> After endeavouring to 'give an account of his stewardship' in various ways as a moralist[18] the author at length found his true vocation, as a teller of stories. The rest is all machinery, sometimes poetical and clumsy, but the stories are the main thing. . . . Love is the theme partly because it supplies a convenient framework for the design.
>
> (Works, I, x-xi)

In an off-handed manner he dismisses Gower's use of the confession, although admitting that it is more naturally used than in the Roman de la Rose, the supposed model for the device (Works, I, xix). Macaulay places the Prologue in a list of serious faults of the Confessio Amantis, saying that "the author did not resist the temptation to express his view on society in a Prologue which is by no means connected with the general scheme of the poem. . . . (Works, I, xix).

C.S. Lewis, who more than any other twentieth-century scholar was responsible for rescuing Gower from the shadow

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Collated with the best Manuscripts (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), I, xxxii-xxxiii. This is the first newly collated complete edition of the Confessio Amantis. Previous editions were reprints of Thomas Berthelette's edition of 1532. Cf. Fisher, pp. 12-14, for a description of the reprints of Berthelette's edition; cf. also Macaulay's comments in his introduction, I, clxviii-clxx.

18 Presumably Macaulay is referring to the Mirour de l'Omme and the Vox Clamantis, and not to Gower's own statement at the opening of Book I.

of comparison with Chaucer, speaks very highly of his use of the confession as a framework for the stories:

> It will be obvious that the device of the lover's confession is the masterstroke which organizes the whole of Gower's material. It is, as far as I know, entirely Gower's own, and he has seldom received credit for it.
>
> (Lewis, p. 200)

Lewis neatly disposes of the question of what to do with the political discussion of the Prologue, as has already been discussed above. For him the choice of the confession is a stroke of genius on Gower's part, adding: "After being so long the 'moral' Gower, to be even the 'clever' Gower, would be no bad exchange."[19]

An assessment of the poem should take into account both the undeniable fact of the love allegory, and at the same time of his love for moralizing, clearly revealed in the Mirour and the Vox Clamantis. The dual framework of the Confessio Amantis shows a balance between the hand of the 'moral' Gower and that of the skilful poet.

Gower dramatizes the opposition of caritas and cupiditas by contrasting the past with the present. He begins with secular society, enumerating the various blessings society enjoyed, with reference to each of the estates of the social hierarchy:

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19 Lewis, p. 200. In the light of the value placed on morality in the Middle Ages, this seems to be an ironic judgment. Lewis admits (p. 198) that the conception of 'moral' has changed drastically in the twentieth century. On the decline of Gower's critical reputation in comparison to Chaucer's see Fisher, pp. 3-36.

> If I schal drawe in to my mynde
> The tyme passed, thanne I finde
> The world stod than in al his welthe:
> Tho was the lif of man in helthe,
> Tho was plente, tho was richesse,
> Tho was the fortune of prouesse,
> Tho was knyhthode in prise be name,
> Wherof the wyde worldes fame
> Write in Cronique is yit withholde;
> (Prol. 93-101).

In this golden age[20] laws were justly administered, kings were safe on their thrones, and the aristocracy was given the worship befitting their station in society. Above all peace ruled the earth:

> The citees knewen no debat,
> The poeple stod in obeissance
> Under the rule of governance,
> And Pes, which ryhtwisnesse keste,
> With charite tho stod in reste. . . .
> (Prol. 106-110)

The opening lines of the main part of the Prologue embody a quiet note of regret, faintly echoing the ubi sunt theme found in many Middle English writings. The implicit regret of the lines suggests that the present time is no longer moved by the same spirit as the past.

Gower contrasts the golden age with the corrupted state of present society, and begins to make explicit the reason for the change:

> Now stant the crop under the rote
> The world is changed overal,
> And therof most in special
> That love is fallen into discord.
> (Prol. 118-121)

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20 The idea of a golden age goes back to classical literature. See, for example, Ovid's description of the aurea . . . aetas in Metamorphoses I. 89-112.

The love that has fallen into discord will be echoed later at the start of Book I, where Gower laments that "Loves lawe is out of reule" (I. 14). The discord is vividly expressed through his description of temporal society:

> Noght upon on, bot upon alle
> It is that men now clepe and calle,
> And sein the regnes ben divided,
> Instead of love is hate guided,
> The werre wol no pes purchase,
> And lawe hath take hire double face,
> So that justice out of the weie
> With ryhtwisnesse is gon aweie. . . .
> (Prol. 125-132)

In contrast to former times life has become paradoxical. Kingdoms are divided, men seek to purchase peace through war, and law has assumed a Janus-like appearance. Division is further found in the king, who as the highest power in society should, by his personal behaviour, set the pattern for a peaceful society. Instead he is led by bad counsel.[21]

Gower suggests that the love that "is fallen into discord" (Prol. 121), and which formed the foundation of the former age, is to be identified with *caritas*. He regretfully points out the increase in war, and adds:

> And that is gretly forto rewe
> In special for Cristes sake,
> Which wolde his oghne lif forsake
> Among the men to yeve pes.
> But now men tellen natheles
> That love is fro the world departed. . . .
> (Prol. 164-169)

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21 This represents a common criticism of Richard II's reign by contemporary writers; cf., for example, *Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. Mabel Day and Robert Steele, E.E.T.S., O.S. No. 199 (London: Oxford, 1936), for similar sentiments.

These lines recall God's great love for man as expressed through the Incarnation: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that all who believed in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). One of Christ's commandments to his disciples was for them to love one another: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). St. Paul later identified this love with caritas, the greatest of all virtues.[22] Although Gower does not make the direct connection between the love which guided the former age and charity at this point in the Prologue, the suggestion remains, and is emphasized by his prayer to God to restore love and peace to the world, at the end of the section on secular society:

> Bot thilke lord which al mai kepe,
> To whom no consail may ben hid,
> Upon the world which is betid,
> Amende that wherof men pleigne
> With trewe hertes and with plein,
> And reconcile love ayeyn.
> As he which is king sovereign
> Of al the worldes governaunce
> And of his hyhe porveaunce,
> Afferme pes betwen the londes,
> And take her cause into hise hondes
> So that the world may stonde appesed
> And his godhede also be plesed.
> (Prol. 180-192)

Christian love, or caritas, is the "social cement"[23] of

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22 Cf. I Cor. 13:13 (Vulgate): "Manent fides, spes, et charitas, haec tres; sed maior est charitas." (And now there remain, faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.)

23 Cf. Fisher, p. 187: "Empedoclean love is the

society, as Gower envisions it. He directs the attention to the results of its absence by contrasting the past with the present, although he does not yet identify the absence of caritas as cupiditas.

The results of an excessive love of the world are made explicit in Gower's discussion of the state of the church (Prol. 193-498). In a long catalogue he enumerates the virtues of the old church, summarizing them in three lines:

> Men sein how that thei weren tho
> Ensample and renk of alle tho
> Which of wisdom the vertu soghten.
> (Prol. 194-196)

After pointing out the absence of simony, he continues:

> To fyhte or for-to make cheste
> It thoghte hem thanne noght honeste;
> Bot of simplesce and pacience
> Thei maden thanne no defence:
> The Court of worldly regalie
> To hem was thanne no baillie.
> (Prol. 215-220)

The church followed the precepts laid down by Christ when he founded the church, and lived up to the ideals of the Christian faith. Gower seems to be advocating a separation of church and state to the extent that the church should be dedicated to heavenly riches, whereas the secular state should devote itself to the pursuit and maintenance of

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social cement of society." Fisher seems to be overstating the case here; Gower's conception of society is set in the framework of a Christian worldview. Cf. Götz Schmitz, p. 67: "Die Wiederstreit von Liebe and Hass durchzieht in beina empedokleische Art die ganze Welt. . . ." (italics added).

earthly wealth and power.

Gower succinctly summarizes the spreading of the gospel, and the virtuous nature of the clergy responsible for its dispersion:

> And thus cam ferst to mannes Ere
> The feith of Crist and alle goode
> Thurgh hem that thanne weren goode
> And sobre and chaste and large and wyse.
> (Prol. 236-239)

The clergy of former times were good men, in the full sense of the word, as seen in their sobriety, their chastity, their generosity, and their wisdom. The adverb 'thanne' emphasizes the fact that they are no longer so, and sets the stage for the contrast with the clergy in the present.

Gower accuses the present-day clergy of taking the sword into their own hands, and of waging war to achieve their covetous ends, in direct contravention of the peace brought by Christ's Incarnation. This warring tendency of the clergy has the further complication in that priests can no longer make peace among the secular rulers:

> I nat how that thei scholde amende
> The woful world in othre thinges,
> To maken pes betwen the kynges
> After the lawe of charite,
> Which is the proper duete
> Belongende unto the presthode.
> (Prol. 254-259)

The clergy have neglected to follow the law of charity, and have directed their efforts instead toward the aggrandizement of their own secular power and wealth. Their chief fault is their covetousness for wordly things. For this reason they have changed the "cherche keie", that is,

the commandments given by Christ to his apostles when he founded the church into swords.[24] The result is the reversal of all that the church formerly represented:

> That scholde be the worldes hele
> Is now, men sein, the pestilence
> Which hath exiled pacience
> For the clergy in special:
> And that is schewed overal
> In eny thing whan thei be grieved.
> (Prol. 278-283)

The clergy is filled with men who took up vows for covetous reasons:

> Noght for the merite of the charge,
> Bot for thei wolde hemself descharge
> Of poverte and become grete.
> (Prol. 301-303)

Their desire to become great causes them to neglect Christ's cause, but they never forget the world:

> In Cristes cause alday thei slepe,
> Bot of the world is noght foryete.
> (Prol. 310-311)

These lines echo Sloth's confession in Piers Plowman,[25] who has been a priest, but who sleeps all day, especially at a time when he should be in church. Sloth knows the pater-noster imperfectly, but can recite rhymes of Robin Hood and the Earl of Chester well. When he was a priest he could not sing mass, or read saint's lives, but when it

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24 This process is the mirror image of that described in Isaiah 2:4: "They shall turn their swords into plough-shares and their spears into sickles."

25 William Langland, Piers Plowman, ed. W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1886, repr. 1960), B. v. 392-468.

came to his own pleasures, he could "fynde in a felde or in a fourlonge an hare / Better than in beatus vir or in beati omnes" (E. v. 424-25).

Gower continues his condemnation with a description of the clergy's avarice, expressed through their neglect of their duty to the poor and the appropriation to themselves of alms meant for the relief of the needy:

> The stronge coffre hath al devoured
> Under the keye of avarice
> The tresor of the benefice,
> Wherof the povere schulden clothe
> And ete and drinke and house bothe;
> The charite goth al unknowe,
> For thei no grein of Pite sowe. . . .
> (Prol. 314-320)

The clergy have locked the goods meant for the poor in their own coffers, and changed the demands of charity into those of avarice. The charge that they show no 'pite' links their sin directly with the absence of caritas in their behaviour. In Book II when discussing the remedy for Envy, Gower describes charity as the mother of 'pite':

> Ayein Envie is Charite,
> Which is the Moder of Pite,
> That makth a mannes herte tendre, . . .
> (II. 3173-74).

In Book VII he again uses the idea to describe the most effective way for a king to rule and be loved by his people: he must maintain in himself 'pite' mixed with justice:

> . . . . . thus I mai argue
> That Pite is the foundement
> Of every kinges regiment,
> If it be medled with justice.
> (VII. 4197-99)

The clergy practise what Gower warns a king not to do: they fail to practise 'pite' in their dealings with the poor, and have turned away from the way of charity. He thereby establishes yet another link with both the confession and one of its major digressions.

The result of their corruption is division. Heresies, of which Gower singles out Lollardy (Prol. 349), have split the church. Each man is out for his own profit, not for the common good. They are guilty of simony, with its roots in covetousness, while their teachings have become filled with hypocrisy. Gower multiplies examples of this:

> With holy tales thei devise
> How meritoire is thilke dede
> Of charite, to clothe and fede
> The povere folke and forto parte
> The worldes good, bot thei departe
> He thenken noght fro that thei have.
> (Prol. 464-69)

Their covetousness reveals itself in a divergence between appearance and reality: they preach one thing, but practise another.

At the root of the problem with the clergy in the present time is their predilection for covetousness. Gower expresses this, for example, by pointing to the prevalence of simony, to the placing of earthly rewards and honour above the souls of the people, and to the use of alms for their own profit, instead of for the care of the poor. The cause is similar to that adduced for the corruption of the state, although he is not as explicit on this point regarding the clergy. Their problem is that they love

earthly goods and rewards more than those promised to them for following the law of charity and the precepts of the Gospel. The church of the past, on the other hand, followed the law of love and reaped appropriate rewards, while the present church has reaped division among themselves, and war instead of peace in the world.

From the corruption of the clergy Gower moves to the problem of the common people (Prol. 499-584). The picture he draws is of a people gone astray, who do not know where to turn for answers to the problems besetting them. Nevertheless he places the blame on man, not God, as, he implies, some have done:

> Bot what man wolde himself avise
> His conscience and noght misuse
> He mai wel ate ferste excuse
> His god, which evre stant in on:
> In him ther is defalte non,
> So most it stonde upon ousselve
> Nought only upon ten ne twelve,
> Bot plenerliche upon ous alle,
> For man is cause of that schal falle.
> (Prol. 520-528)

Some men have blamed Fortune or the stars for division in the world.[26] Gower, however, roundly affirms that God, as the mover behind creation, is in control of both forces. As introduction to the Dream of Nebuchadnezzar[27] he says:

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26 Cf. Boethius, De consolatione philosophiae, ed. and trans. E.K. Rand et al. (London: Heinemann, 1917), II, pr. 1. Cf. Works, I, 463.

27 Based on Daniel 2:31-45. Fisher finds in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar a continuity between the Confessio Amantis and the Vox Clamantis, where it appears in VII.135-364, in truncated form. Cf. Fisher, pp. 185-87.

> . . . . I finde in special
> A tale writen in the Bible,
> Which moste nedes be credible;
> And that as in conclusioun
> Seith that upon divisioun
> Stant, why no worldes thing mai laste,
> Til it be drive to the laste.
> And fro the ferste regne of alle
> Into this day, hou so befalle,
> Of that the regnes ben muable
> The man himself hath be coupable,
> Which of his propre governance
> Fortuneth al the worldes chance.
> (Prol. 572-84)

The results of division are seen among men, within nations, among prelates, and within man. The origin of the division lies within man, however, and ultimately derives from man's fall from grace in the Garden of Eden. Although the Incarnation restored the possibility of harmony in the world, man's sinful nature continually chooses division over harmony.

Gower uses the Dream of Nebuchadnezzar as an <u>exemplum</u> for division in the world. The present has been torn by discord since the collapse of the Frankish kingdom. Following the tale he sounds a solemn note of warning. All the signs he has been describing concerning the secular world, the church, and the common man, are symptomatic of the final days of the world. The stone that destroyed the statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream symbolizes the Last Judgment:

> For so seith Crist withoute faile,
> That nyh upon the worldes ende
> Pes and acord awey schol wende
> And alle charite schal cesse,
> Among the men and hate increscе;
> And whan these toknes ben befalle,
> Al sodeinly the Ston schal falle,
> Als Daniel it hath beknowe,

Which al this world schal overthrowe
And every man schal thanne arise
To Joie or elles to Juise,
Wher that he schal for evere dwelle,
Or straght to hevene or straght to helle.
(Prol. 1032-44)

These lines picture Gower as an apocalyptic writer,[28] in that his ultimate concern is with the final results of man's choice. In the final analysis a choice of the way of charity leads to heaven, while a choice for covetousness leads to hell. He paints a terse picture of heaven and of hell:

In hevene is pes and al acord,
Bot helle is full of suche descord
That ther may be no loveday.
(Prol. 1045-47)

These two states reinforce the difference between the past and the present, but now placed in a cosmic and eternal framework: heaven will be filled with the peace and harmony which the world experienced in the golden age; hell, however, will continue the present discord, but in an unending intensity.

Gower follows this with a call to follow the law of love, giving an indication of his leanings and providing another of a number of direct links with the confession through the theme of love:

Forthi good is, whil a man may,
Echon to sette pes with other

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28 See Morton W. Bloomfield, Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-century Apocalypse (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1961), espec. pp. 44-97, for a description of this genre.

And loven as his oghne brother;
So may he winne worldes welthe
And afterward his soule helthe.
(Prol. 1048-52)

He briefly sums up the positive side of the theme of love as it appears in the Prologue. If a man chooses to love his brother, to practise charity, and to work for peace, then eternal joy, the salvation of his soul, and worldly wealth will be his reward. If, on the other hand, he replaces love of his brother with love of self and of the world's goods, and chooses division and discord over peace and harmony, he will reap eternal pain. The same theme appears again in the confession, where Genius continually directs Amans toward the life guided by caritas, while Amans insists on following his own desires.

Gower repeats the duality of love in the conclusion to the Confessio Amantis, concluding the framework begun in the Prologue. In Book VIII he describes Luxuria or Lechery through the specific instance of Incest, using the tale of Apollonius of Tyre as an exemplum. He provides a gradual transition from the love allegory to the Epilogue by using the themes of natural and unnatural love to represent caritas and cupiditas, and then makes the lesson of the tale applicable, first to Amans' specific case, and then to all life.

The tale contrasts the unnatural lust of Antiochus for his daughter with the properly directed love of Apollonius for his wife and daughter; and Gower contrasts the reward each receives: Antiochus and his daughter

suffer the revenge of God and are struck by lightning. Apollonius, who in the course of the tale loses his wife in a storm at sea, and his daughter through the treachery of a friend, suffers many indignities and hardships, but is eventually reward for his patience with the restoration of his wife and daughter, and gains a son-in-law and a kingdom for himself. Gower makes the lesson clear:

> Lo, what it is to be wel grounded:
> For he hath ferst his love founded
> Honesteliche as forto wedde,
> Honestelich his love spedde
> And hadde children with his wif,
> And as him liste he ladde his life;
> And in ensample his life was write,
> That alle lovers myhten wite
> How ate laste it schal be sene
> Of love what thei wolden mene.
> (VIII. 1993-2002)

The lesson is very explicit. Apollonius, for leading his life 'honestelich' and choosing proper love, is suitably rewarded.[29] His example, Gower makes plain, is meant for all lovers to emulate. If they choose an unnatural love, however, the rewards are equally predictable:

> For se now on that other side,
> Antiochus with al his Pride,
> Which sette his love unkindely
> His ende he hadde al sodeinly
> Set ayein kinde upon vengance,
> And for his lust hath his penance.
> (VIII. 2003-2008)

This kind of love, moreover, is linked to the reasonless lust of animals, when Genius further explicates the moral

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29 Cf. J.A.W. Bennett, "Gower's 'honeste' love," in Patterns of Love and Courtesy, ed. John Lawlor (London, 1961), pp. 107-121, for a discussion of love in marriage as opposed to adulterous courtly love.

of the tale:

> Forthi, my Sone, I wolde rede
> To lete al other love aweie,
> Bot if it be thurgh such a weie
> As love and reson wolde acorde.
> For elles, if that thou descorde,
> And take lust as doth a beste,
> Thi love mai noght ben honeste;
> For be no skile I finde
> Such lust is noght of loves kinde.
> (VIII. 2020-28)

A love that is not honest is classed with the sexual impulses of a beast, guided by will alone, and is contrary to nature. Repetition of the words 'acorde' and 'descorde' establishes a direct link with the theme of division in the Prologue. This suggests that dishonest love falls in the same category as the problems besetting the nation and the church.

The lust chosen by Antiochus is linked at the start of the tale with concupiscence:

> For liking and concupiscence
> Withoute insihte of conscience
> The fader so with lustes blente,
> That he caste al his hole entente
> His oghne doghter forto spille
> (VIII. 293-97).

Although a similar link is not made explicit between Apollonius' love and charity, Gower nevertheless clearly indicates the dual possibility of love: dishonest, unnatural love, linked with concupiscence and hence with cupiditas; and honest, reason-guided and natural love, characterized as the antinomy of cupiditas, and hence identifiable by implication with caritas.

Gower indicates the two possibilities open in love.

In addition he characterizes Amans' love for his lady as cupidinous (VIII. 2087-94). At this point he moves from one level of meaning to a higher one. In the tale of Apollonius he contrasted the lowest form of lust, incest, with a more reasonable and natural love. In the 'sentence' he adds:

> Lo thus, mi Sone, myht thou liere
> What is to love in good manére,
> And what to love in other wise. . . .
> (VIII. 2009-2011)

He now moves beyond this simple distinction, and discusses the problem in terms of earthly and heavenly directed love.

Genius prefaces his remarks to Amans with a repetition of his original intentions, that as a priest of Venus he would hear the lover's shrift concerning love; as a priest, however, he intended to speak of other matters also. Now he says of Amans' love:

> Forthi to speken overmore
> Of love, which thee mai availe,
> Tak love where it mai noght faile:
> For as of this which thou art inne,
> Be that thou seist it is a Sinne,
> And Sinne mai no pris deserve. . . .
> (VIII. 2084-89)

It is no longer sufficient to call Amans' former actions being remiss in the service of Venus, a fault which can be expiated through confession. Genius advises Amans to seek a higher love, instead of following the way "wher thou no profit hast ne pris" (VIII. 2093). This higher love he clearly identifies as caritas at the very end of the poem.

The choice between caritas and cupiditas is, moreover, one between life and death. Genius leaves the matter to Amans:

> Hierafterward it schal be sene
> If that thou lieve upon mi lore;
> For I can do to thee no more
> Bot teche thee the rihte weie:
> Now ches if thou wolt live or deie.
> (VIII. 2144-48)

Genius as priest can only point the way of truth to Amans. These lines recall Gower's distinction between harmony and discord in the Prologue. There he established that one way led to the joys of heaven, the other to the pains of hell (Prol. 1037-52). In the Epilogue he completes this scheme, again pointing out the eternal consequences of the choice. Amans hesitates before making his decision. He begs Genius to take a letter to Cupid and Venus, in which he asks them to reconsider his request. Although his reason tells him Genius' teachings contain the truth, his will refuses to comply. Venus appears to him, and with her a multitude of beautiful women who have suffered or been exemplary in love. Old age, in the company of a large crowd, prays to Venus for Amans' sake, in a delightful scene full of noisy clamouring:

> And, as me thoghte, anon ther was
> On every side so gret a presse,
> That every lif began to presse . . .
> Tho myhte I hiere gret partie
> Spekende, and ech his oghne avis
> Hath told, on that, an other this, . . .
> (VIII. 2750-52, 2762-64).

The scene is more reminiscent of a market place than a

court. Their protestations vary from complete denunciation of Amans' unworthiness as a lover to strong defence of love in old age. Cupid, on the advice of his mother, withdraws the poisoned arrow from Amans' heart:

> Bot he, whiche wolde thanne yive
> His grace, so as it mai be,
> This blinde god which mai noght se,
> Hath groped til that he me fonde;
> (VIII. 2792-95).

Gower adds a humorous touch in the picture of the blind god of love groping for the lover, which undercuts whatever grace and majesty Cupid may have retained to this point. Immediately the vision of the lovers vanishes, and Amans is left only with Venus and Genius. She applies a healing ointment to the wound and Amans, watching himself turn old in her mirror, compares man's life to the passing of the seasons, beginning with the growing life of March and ending with the 'chele' of winter. Venus now asks him to tell her what love is:

> Venus behielde me than and lowh,
> And axeth, as it were in game
> What love was. And I for schame
> Ne wiste what I scholde answere; . . .
> So fer it was out of mi thoght,
> Riht as it hadde nevere be.
> (VIII. 2870-73, 2876-77)

Amans is completely freed from 'loves rage' (VIII. 2863) which had instigated him to begin his confession. He realizes now that he is no longer worthy to serve in her court, and receives absolution from Genius.

At the last moment Venus bids farewell to Amans, and gives him a "Peire of Bedes blak as Sable" (VIII. 2904),

inscribed with the words "por reposer" (VIII. 2907). As Macaulay pointed out (Works, II, 457, note to VIII. 2904) this is a common description for the Rosary. Venus is thereby implicitly identified with the Blessed Virgin[30] who in various visions presented the Rosary to the faithful.[31] The words inscribed on the beads symbolize the end of Amans' quest for internal peace. So often as he prays the Rosary he will be reminded of the vision he has seen. Venus tells Amans to pray for peace and to remember the meaning of her teachings:

> Bot my will is that thou besieche
> And preie hierafter for the pes,
> . . . .
> Mi Sone, be wel war therfore,
> And keep the sentence of my lore
> And tarie thou mi Court nomore,
> Bot go ther vertu moral duelleth,
> Wher ben thi bokes, as men telleth,
> Which of long time thou has write.
> (VIII. 2955-61)

These lines suggest that although Venus has rejected him from her court, he can find comfort in the lesson of the vision he has just witnessed. He returns home 'a softe pas', lost in thought:

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30 This sort of identification was common in the medieval use of classical mythology. Cf. Jean Seznek, The Survival of the Pagan Gods (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), for a discussion of this phenomenon.

31 The origin of the Rosary remains in dispute. Traditionally it was believed that the Blessed Virgin presented it to St. Dominic, founder of the Dominican Order, during the thirteenth century. Its rise in popularity coincided with the growth in mysticism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Cf. Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique (Paris, 1936), XIII, 2902-2911, art. "Rosaire."

> And in this wise, soth to seyn,
> Homward a softe pas y wente,
> Wher that with al myn hol entente
> Uppon the point that y am schryve
> I thenke bidde whil y live.
> (VIII. 2966-70)

The 'point' on which he is shriven is the search after a reward in Venus' court. Genius has already designated this desire as the sin of cupiditas. Amans, now identified as Gower, does not grasp the meaning of this until the moment Venus and his mentor have left him. Freed from the call of the lustful flesh, he can now move in the 'rihte weie' to caritas.

C.S. Lewis would end the poem with Amans' return home. After his eulogy of Gower's art he writes:

> If Gower had known to stop here he would have made an ending worthy to stand beside that of the Iliad or Samson Agonistes.
> Unfortunately he did not. He adds a long and unsuccessful coda; and I am half glad to close on a note of censure, lest the beauties I have described should carry our critical judgment too far captive.
> (Lewis, pp. 221-222)

Lewis' judgment is determined by his choice of the allegory of the lover's confession as the main framework of the Confessio Amantis. Amans' departure for home returns the reader to the real world with which the Prologue began, with the lover fortified by his understanding of the nature of love. Lewis ignores Gower's moral intentions, however: the lesson Amans has learned must be applied to all of life, and given to all men. For this reason Gower completes the moral framework with an Epilogue in which he

applies the lesson of caritas to the social world depicted in the Prologue. He ends the poem with a conscious choice on his part of the way of caritas, and a rejection of cupiditas.

The gift of the beads leads fittingly to the final portion of the poem. The poet, aware now of his vocation, returns home to pray for peace, as Venus had commanded him, as Genius had suggested to him, and as he himself had done in the Prologue. The Latin verses seem to be a lull between the emotion-laden discovery of truth, and the stately prayer for the state of the world which follows. The periodicity of the opening lines, faintly reminiscent of the opening of the Canterbury Tales, immediately establishes a religious and reverent mood. Gower unequivocally acknowledges God as the creator of all things, and man as a partaker of immortality. He prays penitently for the return of good government to England:

> To thilke lord in special,
> As he which is of alle thinges
> The creatour, and of the kynges
> Hath the fortunes uppon honde,
> His grace and mercy forto fonde
> That he this lond in siker weie
> Wol sette uppon good governance.
> (VIII. 2980-87)

These are the words of Gower the social critic, but tempered by a tone that was for the greatest part lacking in the Prologue, here made especially poignant by the fact that he is praying on 'bare knes'. It seems as if the poet has acquired a measure of humility through the experience and with the onset of old age.

He now directs himself once more to the estates of society. He reiterates the evil of division in the world, and points to the only solution possible in a Christian world. Of the clergy he writes:

> Ferst forto loke the Clergie,
> Hem oughte wel to justefie
> Thing which belongith to here cure,
> As forto praise and to procure
> Oure pes toward the hevene above,
> And ek to sette reste and love
> Among ous on this erthe hiere.
> For if they wroughte in this manere
> Aftir the reule of charite,
> I hope that men schuldyn se
> This londe amende.
>
> (VIII. 2995-3005)

The theme of charity presented in the Prologue comes to the foreground in the Epilogue. As he pointed out in the Prologue, the clergy, more than any other estate in society, are culpable for bringing about division, because they are most closely acquainted with the 'reule of charite' (Prol. 240-498; cf. also V. 1932-54). In the Epilogue he once more points out their true role in society: to bring men to salvation, to praise God, and to bring love and peace among men on earth. If they follow these commands of the law of charity, amendment of the evils in society remains a distinct possibility.

The order of knighthood has also been remiss in its duty of protecting the common people and the church. Gower then puts the finger on the cause of the division:

> And if men sechin sikernesse
> Uppon the lucre of marchandie,
> Compassement and tricherie

> Of singuler profit to wynne,
> Men seyn, is cause of mochil synne,
> And namely of divisioun,
> Which many a noble worthi toun
> Fro welthe and fro prosperite
> Hath brought to grete adversite.
> (VIII. 3036-44).

Seeking security in earthly goods, identified directly as 'covaitise' in Book V (lines 1987 ff.), is the same as the vice besetting the clergy in the Prologue. Gower sees this as the root of all evil in the world. As the antidote he proposes that men should be 'al on' and seek the common profit instead of individual gain, for that would bring peace to the cities and the land.

He next turns to the king, and summarizes his place in society, as well as his duties:

> For if a kyng wol justefie
> His lond and hem that beth withinne,
> First at hymself he mot beginne,
> To kepe and reule his own astat,
> That in hym self be no debat
> Toward his god:
> (VIII. 3080-86).

These words clearly recall Genius' advice to Amans to rule his own kingdom first.[32] Gower does not dwell long on the duties of the king, or on the results of failure to obey that duty. That necessity has been obviated by the

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32 VIII. 2111-31. For a discussion of the personal basis of Gower's political theory, see Arthur B. Ferguson, The Articulate Citizen and the English Renaissance (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1965). He uses Langland, Gower, and Mum and the Sothsegger as sources for public opinion and political theory of the late fourteenth century as a basis of comparison for the outburst of Tudor pamphleteers. His analysis, though interesting, is somewhat patronizing of the fourteenth century.

long discussion in Book VII. He cautions the king to follow the law of charity, and to turn from vice:

> Bot what kyng that with humble chere
> Aftir the lawe of god eschuith
> The vices, and the vertus suieth,
> His grace schal be suffisant
> To governe al the remenant
> Which longith to his duite;
> So that in his prosperite
> The poeple schal noght ben oppressid,
> Wherof his name schal be blessid,
> For evere and be memorial.
> (VIII. 3096-3105)

The duty of a king is to humbly turn from vice, and follow virtue. Significantly Gower adds: 'aftir the lawe of god', suggesting once more that the way to return harmony is for a king to follow the law of charity.

The conclusion of the poem takes the form of a palinode.[33] In much the same way as Chaucer counselled young men and women to pursue heavenly love in Troilus and Criseyde[34], Gower rejects cupiditas and vows to follow caritas. The marginal note summarizes his intentions as he had stated them in the Prologue and in Book I, but now he emphasizes that the preferable and only profitable kind of love to be pursued is charity:

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33 The use of the palinode as a literary device dates back to classical times. In the medieval tradition it was especially used to counteract the possibility of being accused of non-Christian sentiment. Andreas Capellanus, for example, in his De honeste amore, after describing the various ways of succeeding in earthly love relationships, adds a final book in which he points out the advantages of following heavenly love and rejecting earth-bound fleshly desire.

34 Troilus and Criseyde, ed. F.N. Robinson, Works of Chaucer, V. 1835-1848.

> Hic in fine recapitulat super hoc quod in principio libri primi promisit se in amoris causa specialius tractaturum. Concludit enim quod omnis amoris delectacio extra caritatem nichil est.
> (VIII. 3108 marg.)
>
> (Here in the end he recapitulates what he promised in the beginning of the first book, that he would treat especially with the way of love. For he concludes that the delight of all love outside charity is nothing.)

In the English lines he asks to be excused for not always following the fine art of rhetoric, "For thilke scole of eloquence / Belongith nought to my science" (VIII. 3115-16). In an earlier recension he was more explicit about the subject matter of the Confessio Amantis. There he writes:

> In some partie it mai be take
> As for to lawhe and for to pleye;
> And for to loke in other weye,
> It mai be somdel to the wise:
> So that somdel for good aprise
> And eke somdel for lust and game
> I have it made.
> (VIII. 3054*-62*)

In the final recension he has reduced this to a mere five lines, expressed in far more general terms:

> And now to speke as in final
> Touchende that y undirtok
> In englesch forto make a book
> Which stant betwene ernest and game,
> I have it maad. . . .
> (VIII. 3106-3109)

The words 'ernest' and 'game' recall the 'lust' and 'lore' of the Prologue (Prol. 19). They seem to echo Chaucer's injunction to that part of the audience that might be offended by the bawdiness of the Miller's Tale (Cant. Tales, I (A) 3167-85). Gower thus reiterates effectively the sentiments of the opening lines of the poem.

Now that he has returned to the point of departure he makes his farewell to earthly love, or cupiditas, urged on by his muse. He emphasizes the fickle nature of love, which cannot see the 'rihte weie', but causes only division within and among men. Then he prays that charity may live among men:

> Bot thilke love which that is
> Withinne a mannes herte affermed,
> And stant of charite confermed,
> Such love is goodly forto have,
> Suche love mai the bodi save,
> Such love mai the soule amende;
> The hyhe god such love ous sende
> Forthwith the remenant of grace;
> So that above in thilke place
> Wher resteth love and alle pes,
> Our joie mai ben endeles. (VIII. 3162-72)

The last lines once again recall his warning against cupiditas and his promise of the rewards of caritas in the Prologue. Gower's palinode is a fitting end to the poem. He describes 'covoitise' as the root of division, and the greatest part of the poem deals with the effects of cupiditas in its various forms. His choice for caritas reaffirms Genius' advice to Amans, to pursue that love that cannot be destroyed.

# CHAPTER III

## THE VARIETIES OF LOVE: AMANS AND GENIUS

The opposition of caritas and cupiditas Gower sets up as the main theme of the moral framework of the Confessio Amantis finds its expression in the lover's confession. Venus and Cupid, whose service Amans seeks to enter at the opening of the confession, are from the start of Book I characterized as advocates of a sensual, cupidinous love, described in terms calculated to point out its sinful nature. This description of love culminates in its paradoxical characterization as a 'jolif wo'. Amans' ardent quest for positive reward in the court of love can thus be seen as a representation of his desire for cupiditas, reaching its culmination in the priest's rejection of this love in Book VIII, and the lover's subsequent dismissal from Venus' court and his acceptance of caritas.

Amans' true inclinations are gradually revealed in the poem. At the opening of Book I he complains of his 'jolif wo' and his inability to find satisfaction from his lady. He begs Venus for mercy, and is placed under the care of Genius, her priest, to whom he is to confess his sins in

love. A pattern emerges concerning the nature of his quest through his rejoinders to the priest. Amans favours the supremacy of the human will and of the senses in love. This is, of course, a perversion of the ideal state, in which reason is supreme over the senses. Amans, so long as he is on his quest, inverts the natural order where reason is in control. Only when he chooses the way of caritas is this inverted order restored to its proper balance.

Genius, as a priest of Venus, is of necessity a spokesman for cupidinous love. In addition to this, however, he points out that he is a member of the order of the priesthood, and therefore a spokesman for charitable love. This function enjoins on him the task of pointing out the true way of salvation to Amans. He appears fully capable of fulfilling this dual role, and is well aware of his responsibilities: enlightening Amans on the nature of love, and pointing out the nature of sin through his teachings.[1] His own predilection is made clear during the course of Book V, when he explicitly rejects Venus for

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1 This is in accordance with the general idea of confession. Cf. medieval penitential handbooks, such as Robert Mannyng of Brunne, Handlyng Synne, ed. F.J. Furnivall, E.E.T.S., O.S. Nos. 119 and 123 (London: Oxford, 1902). The structural pattern of the Confessio Amantis is analogous to that found in the sacrament of penance: the penitential sermon corresponds to the Prologue; Amans' state of contrition is found in the opening of Book I; the actual confession forms the body of the poem; satisfaction occurs during Venus' rejection of the lover from her court; Genius administers absolution to the lover after the rejection; and the lover is moved to seek a renewed spiritual life when he affirms his decision to follow the way of charity.

her incestuous relations with her brother and her son.

Throughout the poem Genius is an advocate for reasonable behaviour, and for measure in all things, including love, although he remains at the same time a nominal spokesman for cupiditas because of his role as a priest of Venus. His 'lore', or teachings, are based on the primacy of reason over will. At the end of the tale of Apollonius of Tyre he recalls his intentions regarding the confession. As priest of Venus he has instructed Amans on the vices as they relate to love. As a member of the priesthood he intended more than that:

> I seide I wolde of myn office
> To vertu more than to vice
> Encline, and teche thee mi lore.
> Forthi to speken overmore
> Of love, which thee mai availe,
> Take love where it mai noght faile:
> (VIII. 2081-86).

His final words of teaching are directed at the virtue of a love higher than that represented by Venus. This love, later specifically identified as caritas, has eternal rewards, and is governed by reason. Genius advises Amans to end his quest for satisfaction in Venus' court, adding:

> Yit it is time to withdrawe,
> And set thin herte under that lawe,
> The which of reson is governed
> And noght of will.
> (VIII. 2133-36)

Throughout the poem Genius represents a reasonable approach in all things. This process reaches a climax in the conclusion when he points Amans in the direction of caritas.

The confrontation of reason and will through the dialogue

between Genius and Amans forms the basic pattern for the confession. In addition to this conflict, Gower provides a number of characteristics of the love Amans is seeking and which Venus represents. He continually emphasizes love's fickleness, often relating it to the wheel of fortune. Love is paradoxical, blind, and a powerful force which perverts the reason, and causes a man under its influence to behave erratically and contrary to reason. These characteristics are developed through the *exempla* Genius adduces to illustrate the sins, and through the feelings and thoughts Amans expresses. By the end of Book VIII a full picture of earthly emerges, and the true nature of Amans' quest is made clear. Like Andreas Capellanus in his *De amore*,[2] Gower devotes most of the poem to earthly love, and at the end, when the nature of this love is made crystal-clear, he points the way to *caritas*. Through the dialogue between Amans and Genius Gower develops the duality of love as *caritas* and *cupiditas*.

Book I begins with a general description of the pervasive and perverse effects of love in the world. The poet adduces his own woeful case as a specific example of this effect. The paradoxical nature of this love identifies it with *cupiditas*, rather than with *caritas*. He initially alludes to his previous attempts at didactic writing:

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2 Ed. E. Trojel, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1964). There is a readable, though at times inaccurate translation by J.J. Parry (New York, 1965).

I may noght strecche up to the hevene
Min hand, ne setten al in evene
This world, which evere is in balance:
It stant noght in my sufficance
So grete thinges to compasse,
Bot I mot lete it overpasse
And treten upon othre thinges.
(I. 1-7)

He acknowledges his failure in the great enterprise he had set for himself, and he has found that the feats of universal significance he attempted to accomplish have proved beyond his 'sufficance' or ability. For this reason he has decided to concern himself with a more common, and at the same time a more fundamental matter: from now on his subject will be love, a matter which is "noght so strange",

Which every kinde hath upon honde,
And wherupon the world mot stonde,
And hath don sithen it began,
And schal whil ther is any man;
(I. 11-14).

Love encompasses all 'kinde', or nature, and from the beginning of the world has been its foundation and guiding principle. Gower, writing in the context of a Christian world view, was well aware of the perverse effects of man's fall from grace through original sin; he has already identified the fall as the beginning of discord in the world (Prol. 1006-1011). The love which he proposes to examine is, therefore, initially at least, conditioned by man's sinful nature.

Gower has already indicated the paradoxical nature of earthly love in the Latin verses at the head of Book I:

Naturatus amor nature legibus orbem
Subdit, et unanimas concitat esse feras:

> Huius enim mundi Princeps esse videtur,
> Cuius eget dives, pauper et omnis ope. . . .
> Est amor egra salus, vexata quies, pius error,
> Bellica pax, vulnus dulce, suave malum.
> (I. Lat. I, 1-4, 7-8)
>
> ("Created love subjects the world to the Laws of Nature, and incites all to be of one mind in being wild. Love seems to be the Prince of the world, and no matter what their estate, rich or poor, all are in need of him. . . . Love is health that is sickness, a stillness without quiet, a truancy that is faithfull, a peace that is all war, a refreshing wound, a sweet evil.")[3]

The last two lines in particular express the antinomies inherent in earthly love. The lines in Latin preceding the various divisions of the Confessio Amantis generally function as a brief summary of the English text which follows. It is particularly significant that Gower should preface a discussion of love with a summary describing the object in terms of irreconcilable opposites.

Love in the present time is uncontrolled, as Gower points out at the start of his description:

> In which [sc. love] ther can noman him reule
> For loves lawe is out of reule,
> That of tomoche or of tolite
> Welnyh is every man to wyte.
> (I. 17-20)

He implies that there was a time when 'loves lawe' was 'in reule'. The complaint of the absence of love repeats his assertions in the Prologue concerning the present world. He there contrasts this world with the past, when love and

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3 Translated by Frederick W. Locke, in Confessio Amantis, ed. Russell A. Peck (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 500.

harmony ruled the earth. His description of love in Book I may thus be seen as an elaboration of the source for the problems besetting the world (cf. Pearsall, p. 484).

There is no medicine that may be found to cure love's wounds. The whole idea of being wounded in love is graphically expressed by Guillaume de Lorris in the Roman de la Rose[4] where, after seeing and smelling the Rose at the heart of the garden, the lover is pursued and wounded by the God of Love, with five arrows. The first arrow, Beauty, causes great pain, but produces no blood. When the dreamer tries to remove the arrow, the head remains deeply embedded. Though there is no blood from the wound, the anguish caused by the wound is overwhelming:

> But in my herte still it stod,
> Al bledde I not a drope of blod.
> I was both anguyssous and trouble
> For the perill that I saw double:
> I nyste what to seye or do,
> Ne get a leche my woundis to;
> For neithir thurgh gras ne rote
> Ne hadde I help of hope ne bote.
> (Roman, 1753-60)

Gower expresses a similar idea concerning the wounds of love:

> For yet was nevere such a covine,
> That couthe ordeine a medicine
> To thing which god in lawe of kinde

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4 Ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1914), 5 vols. There is a good prose translation by Charles Dahlberg (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), in which he tries to give as literal rendering as the French text will permit. I quote from the Middle English translation ascribed to Chaucer, in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson, pp. 564-637.

Hath set, for ther may noman finde
The rihte salve of such a Sor.
(I. 29-33)

It must be remembered that at this point in Book I Gower is describing the nature of love in general. Later in Book I he specifically describes the action of Cupid in a way that is characteristic of medieval love poetry. Love is a sickness, or wound, for which no healing power of man is efficacious.[5] This characteristic recalls, of course, his description in the Latin verses quoted above.

The final general characteristic of love is its close relation to fortune, with all its attendant failings. He describes the fickleness of love:

It hath and schal ben everemor
That love is maister wher he wile,
Ther can no lif make other skile;
For wher as evere him leste to sette,
Ther is no myht which him may lette.
(I. 34-38)

This characteristic is emphasized by the direct link with Fortune's wheel:

For if ther evere was balance
Which of fortune stant governed,
I may wel lieve as I am lerned
That love hath that balance on honde,
Which wol no reson understonde.
(I. 42-46)

The repetition of 'balance' governed by love contrasts with the opening of the book, where Gower describes his inability

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5 Cf. Chaucer, Book of the Duchess, ed. Robinson, lines 35-40, where the dreamer mentions the existence of a unique physician for his illness. Robinson, p. 774, in his note to these lines calls the idea of the lady as physician a 'commonplace'.

to set the world 'al in evene'. In this way it further relates to the present condition of the world as described in the Prologue, where the absence of caritas has produced imbalance. Gower specifically relates the 'balance' governed by fortune to that of love, and thereby expresses the lack of balance common to love and fortune.[6] The identification with fortune is even more clearly expressed by the next lines:

> For love is blind and may noght se,
> Forthi may no certeinete
> Be set upon his jugement,
> Bot as the whiel aboute went
> He yifth his graces undeserved.
> (I. 47-51)

Love's blindness is a common attribute. Cupid, for example, is often portrayed wearing a blindfold. Line 50, where the wheel is mentioned, is cast in the form of a simile; the 'whiel' need therefore not be ascribed to love, but merely likens the action of love to that of fortune. Later, however, Gower gives the wheel of fortune into the hand of Venus, the goddess of love,[7] and thus clearly relates the two.

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6 Cf. Boethius' discussion of Fortune in De Consolatione Philosophiae, Book II; particularly noteworthy is his emphasis on the unbalancing effects of fortune on the affairs of all who come under her influence. See also H.R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927).

7 Cf. I. 249-[illegible]
> Bot sche [illegible]epth the blinde whel,
> Venus, wh[illegible] be moste above,
> In al the [illegible]e of here love,
> Hire whiel [illegible] torneth, and thei felle
> In the mang[illegible]e as I schal telle.

He finally emphasizes the undependable nature of love, by comparing its action to a game of dice:

> . . . fro that man which hath him served
> Fulofte he takth aweye his fees,
> As he that pleieth ate Dees,
> And therupon what schal befalle,
> He not, til that the chance falle,
> Wher he schal lese or he schal falle.
> (I. 52-57)

The comparison of love and fortune, expressed through the simile of a game of dice, takes up more than half of the general description of love, and emphasizes fickleness and intemperateness as one of the primary characteristics of love.

These qualities of love, briefly outlined at the opening of Book I, are continually repeated in the Confessio Amantis. The tale of Mundus and Pauline, told as an exemplum of hypocrisy in love, describes the effect of love on Duke Mundus:

> Bot yet he was noght of such myht
> The strengthe of love to withstonde,
> That he ne was so broght to honde
> That malgre where he wol or no,
> This yonge wif he loveth so,
> That he hath put al his assay
> To wynne thing which he ne may
> Gete of hire graunt in no manere,
> Be yifte of gold ne be preiere.
> (I. 786-94)

The effect of love leads him to contemplate any method that will satisfy his desire for Pauline. Mundus resembles the man not wise enough to temper the wild emotions of love, and, once under love's influence, he moves beyond the bounds of normal behaviour to satisfy his desire. The priests of

Isis who are privy to his plan of seduction are executed for their pains, and their temple is torn down. Mundus, however, is merely exiled:

> For he with love was bestad,
> His dom was noght so harde lad;
> For Love put reson aweie
> And can noght se the rihte weie.
> (I. 1049-52)

This represents the standard way of describing love. Any man caught in the snare of love becomes subject to his own will and passions, uncontrolled by reason.

The possession of reason is the distinguishing mark of man.[8] Love causes a man to lose this distinction, and to behave in ways contrary to reason. Narcissus, for example, was so proud of his beauty, that he withstood the advances of love. One day, while hunting, he saw his reflection in a still pool of water, and was so entranced with the beautiful image, that he fell in love with it. At last, desperate at his inability to possess the image, he beat

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8 Cf., for example, St. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L.H. Hackstaff (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), I.55-56 (p. 16):
Augustine: ". . . But then tell me, since it is evident that man is easily outdone by most beasts in strength and other physical attributes, what is it in which a man so excels that no beast can rule him, whereas man can rule many beasts? Is it perhaps what is usually called reason (ratio) or understanding (intelligentia)?"
Evodius: "I can discover nothing else, since that by which we excel beasts is in the spirit. . . . Since they are animate (animalia), what term can I use more appropriate than "reason" to designate what it is their spirits lack so that they are subordinate to us, and which is present in ours so that we are superior to them? For this is by no means an insignificant thing, as everyone knows."

his head against a rock until he was dead. He was buried by the nymphs of the forest, and out of his grave beautiful flowers sprang up. These flowers, says Gower, should be an example to men of Narcissus' folly:

> For in the wynter freysshe and faire
> The floures be, which is contraire
> To kynde, and so was the folie
> Which fell of his Surquiderie.
> (I. 2355-58)

Narcissus was guilty of an unnatural folly, and dies as a result. To this the confessor adds, making the application of the tale explicit for Amans' benefit:

> Thus he, which love hadde in desdeign,
> Worst of all othre was besein,
> And as he sette his pris most hyhe,
> He was lest worth in loves yhe
> And most bejaped in his wit:
> (I. 2359-63)

Because Narcissus valued his own beauty more than all mankind, and would not submit to the ordinary demands of love, he fell into a self-destructive love, which of itself could see no fruition, and he came to be 'bejaped' in his mind, that is, mad.

Gower makes many such references to the power of love to undermine reason. The tale of Canace and Machaire concerns the incestuous love between a brother and a sister. In their innocent youth they lived and played together, until they grew up to an age when love could exert its power on them. At this time, when they were come

> Into the youthe of lusti age,
> Whan kinde assaileth the corage
> With love and doth him forto bowe,
> That he no reson can allowe,

Bot halt the lawes of nature:
For whom that love hath under cure,
As he is blind himself riht so
He makth his client blind also.
(III. 153-160)

Here the same qualities of love introduced at the opening of Book I are represented. Love shuns reason, goes contrary to the laws of nature if necessary, and blinds his devotees even to the laws of consanguinity. Machaire casts his desire on his sister, under the tutelage of Cupid. Gower describes their relationship as the blind leading the blind; enchanted by love, they see no danger in their relationship, nor do they understand it. In the end their father banishes Machaire from the kingdom, and Canace in despair commits suicide, because they followed the laws of love and the call of nature.

The general characteristics of love are exemplified in Amans' quest. His confession to Genius forms the dramatic framework for the tales of the Confessio Amantis. Its literary raison d'être is the lover's inability to gain satisfaction from his lady, and his consequent sorrow. The best evidence for determining the kind of love he desires may be found in the disclosures of his innermost feelings and secret desires, under the safe cloak of the confessional. He introduces the confession with a description of his own adventures in love:

I may tell, if ye woll hiere,
A wonder hap which me befell,
That was to me bothe hard and fell,
Touchende of love and his fortune,
(I. 66-69).

The 'wonder hap' resembles the opening of Piers Plowman, where Langland sees "a ferly of fairy me thoughte" (B Prol. 6). Gower suggests that the poem which is to follow, and which he wishes "plainly forto telle . . . oute" (I. 71), is to be a tale of wonder, perhaps resembling a fairy tale. This illusion is quickly shattered by the following lines, when he uses the words 'hard' and 'fell' to describe his adventure, suggesting both a chastising experience, and perhaps, in the word 'fell', an experience with dark and evil forces. His tale is meant to be an exemplum for lovers, as he expressly states:

> To hem that ben lovers aboute
> Fro point to point I wol declare
> And wryten of my woful care,
> Mi woful day, my woful chance,
> That men mowe take remembrance
> Of that thei schall hierafter rede:
> (I. 72-77)

He again strikes a somber note with the three-fold repetition of 'my woful care, / My woful day, my woful chance'. These are the words of Gower the 'moral' poet, but at the same time they express deep personal involvement. His purpose resembles that of Chaucer who writes Troilus and Criseyde "to don gladnesse / To any lovere" (I. 19-20).

The first purpose for disclosing the confession is to provide an exemplum for lovers to learn from. The second purpose provides a direct link with the Prologue:

> For in good feith this wolde I rede,
> That every man ensample take
> Of wisdam which him is betake,
> And that he wot of good aprise

To teche it forth, for such emprise
Is forto preise;
(I. 79-83).

This echoes Gower's avowal in the Prologue (lines 61-65), that its subject matter is for the wise man. He immediately returns to the main matter at hand, however, and for the third time sounds a dark note:

. . . and therfore I
Woll wryte and schewe al openly
How love and I togedre mette,
Wherof the world ensample fette
Mai after this, whan I am go
Of thilke unsely jolif wo,
Whos reule stant out of the weie,
Hou glad and now gladnesse aweie,
And yet it may noght be withstonde
For ought that men may understonde.
(I. 83-92)

The last five lines reiterate the picture of the variability of love he has already sketched, with the addition of a delectable ambiguity. Love 'whos reule stant out of the weie' clearly echoes "For loves lawe is out of reule" (I. 18). It is uncertain whether he means love as cupiditas, or love as caritas, since both seem equally apt. If it is the former, referring to the love between men and women which is no longer observed, then it refers specifically to Amans' problem. It may then refer to the whole courtly love tradition, with its established conventions and set rules of behaviour.[9] The word may equally well refer to the

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9 On courtly love with particular reference to Gower see W.G. Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Boston, 1913), pp. 1-69; see also Lewis, passim. For a correlation between courtly love and cupiditas see D.W. Robertson Jr., "The Subject of the De amore of Andreas Capellanus", Modern

healing, harmonious love of the Prologue. In this case it echoes his earlier lament that

> The world is changed overal
> And therof most in special
> That love is falle into discord.
> (Prol. 119-121)

In their context in Book I the lines indicate earthly love, since 'whos' refers to the 'unsely jolif wo' (I. 88). In this case, the line strongly suggests a reference to the broad way of cupiditas,[10] in the sense that the love whose spell the poet is under clearly stands outside the narrow way of caritas. The lines reflect the characteristics of earthly love enumerated in the Latin verses. It behaves like fortune's wheel, now bringing happiness, now taking it away. It is omnipotent, in that no one may withstand it. To this Gower adds, "For oght that men may understonde" (I. 92, italics added), suggesting that someone other than man may be able to understand its effects and paradoxes.

Three times the poet introduces a dark note concerning his adventures in love. His state of mind is clearly shown in the beginning of the vision. One day the poet goes for a walk in the forest:

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Philology, L (1953), 145-161; and idem, A Preface to Chaucer, passim.

10 The image of the narrow way leading to heaven and the broad way leading to hell is a commonplace, based on Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way leadeth to destruction; and many there are who enter by it. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way, which leadeth to life; and few there are, who find it!" (Doway-Rheims).

> And that was in the Monthe of Maii
> Whan every brid has chose his make
> And thenkth his merthes forto make
> Of love that he hath achieved;
> (I. 100-103).

The setting and time are typical of much medieval love poetry and visionary writing, such as the Roman de la Rose, the Canterbury Tales, or Langland's Piers Plowman, to name but a few examples. The month of May, or the spring season, is generally associated with the return of spring, fertility, and the blossoming of new life and love.[11]

The setting Gower chooses is a forest. He walks until he finds a "swote grene pleine", "the wode amiddes" (I. 113-112), a kind of enclosed garden.[12] His own mood contrasts sharply with that expected of both time and place:

> Bot so was I nothing relieved,
> For I was further fro my love
> Than Erthe is fro the hevene above,
> (I. 104-106)

He expressly states that his reason for going to the 'wode' is "Noght forto singe with the briddes" (I. 111). He goes as a man "forfare", as one who has lost his fortune. His behaviour bespeaks a great sorrow:

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11 The Dionysian festivals in Greece, for example, were held during the month of May. In the Roman Catholic tradition this month is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, indicating a carry-over from the pagan Roman tradition. In addition may be cited the celebration of the Resurrection during the Easter season.

12 It is interesting to note that the whole confession takes place on this 'grene plein' which, enclosed by the forest, forms a hortus conclusus. Cf. D.W. Robertson, Jr., "The Doctrine of Charity and Mediaeval Literary Gardens," Speculum, XXVI (1951), 24-48.

> And ther I gan my wo compleigne
> Wisshinge and weping al myn one,
> For other merthes made I none.
> So hard me was that ilke throwe,
> That ofte sithes overthrowe
> To grounde I was withoute breth;
> And evere I wisshide after deth.
> (I. 114-120)

He acts as a man in despair, who desires no more than to die.[13] The reason for his sorrow is clearly evident: he receives no response from his lady to his protestations of love. Not until the end of the poem is the reason made clear. Gower is an old man, and hence unfitted for the service of Venus. But this is not clear at this point. Venus questions his sincerity, calling him one of the many "faitours" (I. 174) who pretend to do her service. Once the reader knows that Gower is too old, his sorrow begins to seem reasonable, though perhaps also somewhat more pathetic. There is, however, no suggestion of this here.[14]

Gower the lover seeks a reward for having served faithfully, and unfruitfully in Venus' court. When she asks him who he is, and of what "Sor" he complains he replies:

> Ma dame, I am a man of thyne,
> That in thi court have longe served,

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13 For an analogous situation cf. that of the Black Knight in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess, ed. Robinson, lines 443 ff.

14 But cf. Donald Schueler, "The Age of the Lover in Gower's Confessio Amantis," Medium Aevum, XXXVI (1967), 152-158.

And aske that I have deserved,
Some wele after my longe wo.
(I. 168-170)

"Wele after . . . wo" recalls similar designations with respect to the turning of the wheel of fortune. The lover seeks reward for his long-suffering. Venus gives no direct indication of the reason for his lady's unresponsiveness. She merely tells him that he must first be shriven:

. . . . . In aunter if thou live,
He will is ferst that thou be schrive;
(I. 189-190).

This may be seen as a mere device on the poet's part to introduce the second major character, Genius, but he makes the transition skilfully. The lover's sorrow, in Christian terms, is not only a sorrow for faithfully bearing the pains of love, but also the beginning of contrition for sins, a necessary prolegomenon to genuine confession. Her call to confession is a tacit admission that the lover has sinned with respect to love, and that that is the reason for his rejection.

Amans' responses to the confessor's questions clearly reveal the nature of his relationship with his lady. He is persistently vocal in trying to win her love by persuasion, and when she commands him to find another love he disobeys instinctively, though he stands so far removed from her grace that he has no chance of succeeding with her, as he says movingly:

For also wel sche myhte seie,
'Go take the Mone ther it sit',
As bringe that into my wit;

For ther was nevere rooted tre,
That stod so faste in his degre,
That I ne stonde more faste
Upon hire love, . . .
(I. 1316-22).

As may be seen, Amans is often given to flights of hyperbole when describing his 'grete love' (I. 1299). He has often dressed himself in fancy clothing to draw her attention to him, and composed 'rondeal, balade and virelai' (I. 2727) as well as 'caroles with wordes queinte' (I. 2730) and 'love songes' (I. 2739) in order to persuade her, but to no avail. He may be contrasted with Tristan, a favourite example of a successful lover, who by his unexcelled harp playing won favour at the Irish court.[15]

Amans finds himself guilty of envy, and thinks nothing of spreading false tales about others vying for her favour. His desire for her leads to thoughts of 'supplantacioun', in that he wishes by strength to remove others from her presence, so that he may 'welde hire at mi willes' (II. 2411). Only the fear of 'sklaundre' (II. 2416) prevents him from using force because he desires at all costs to maintain her good name. His heart is 'evere hot / For wratthe' in his unsuccessful attempts and her refusals, which ring in his ears a 'thousand times on a day' (III. 59), continually moving him to anger. His raging melancholy is expressed in no uncertain terms:

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15 Cf., for example, Gottfried von Strassbourg, Tristan, trans. A.T. Hatto (Hammondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1960), pp. 138-149.

> And for the while that it [sc. anger] lasteth
> Al up so doun my joie it casteth;
> (III. 79-80).

The slightest disturbance sends him off to 'wode as do the wylde Se,' and his servants about him believe firmly that he is raging in his anger.

Amans, in his desire for a favourable word from his lady, behaves as man possessed by madness. He can only express his great grief to his lady when given the chance:

> For whan my time comth aboute,
> That I dar speke and seie al oute
> My longe love, of which sche wot
> That evere in on aliche hot
> Me grieveth, thanne al my desese
> I telle, and though it hir displese
> I speke it forth and noght me leve:
> (III. 523-29)

He tells all his desires and of his 'hot' grief, when given the chance. Reason bids him leave this hopeless quest, but his will argues contrary to that course of action.[16] This places Amans' desire in perspective. His wish for 'grace' from his lady can, in terms of courtly love, come merely in the form of one favourable word from her. The fact that reason counsels him to desist from his quest, while will urges him on, characterizes his whole love as a product of his will ungoverned by reason.

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16 Cf. III. 1179-1184:
> Reson seith that I scholde leve
> To love, wher ther is no leve
> To spede, and will seith therayein
> That such an herte is to vilein,
> Which dar noght love and til he spede,
> Let hope serve at such a nede.

Amans adds a suggestive remark to "The Prayer of Cephalus" in Book IV. Cephalus, abed with Aurora, prays to Phoebus to keep 'his Lyhtes . . . unborn' so that he may keep her naked by his side. Then he prays to Diana, goddess of the moon, to maintain her light, to enable him to remain awake to perform the 'nyhtes feste'. To this Amans replies:

> Mi fader, who that hath his love
> Abedde naked by his syde,
> And wolde thanne hise yhen hyde
> With Slep, I not what man is he:
> Dot certes as touchende of me,
> That fell me nevere yit er this.
> (IV. 3276-81)

Earlier he confessed that he had often dreamt of meeting his lady, without the presence of 'danger', and found complete joy. Here he says, however, that in reality he has never yet had his lady 'naked by his syde', suggesting that there lies the pinnacle of his hoped-for achievement.

That Amans' quost is directed toward sexual fulfillment is confirmed in the discussion of love's delicacy in Book VI. Genius describes the sin in terms of a man who, though he possesses the fairest wife in the land, still finds others more attractive. Amans strongly denies such desire on his part, stating that he has not even won his lady as his wife, and can therefore not be in that position. Then he adds:

> Dot al withoute such repást
> Of lus, as ye me tolde above,
> Of wif, of yit of other love,
> I faste, and mi no fode gete;
> (VI. 698-701).

The food imagery is in keeping with Gula, the topic of Book VI. Amans remains celibate in love, not voluntarily, but because his lady enforces it with her denials. His own desire is inclined toward an enjoyment of the fruit:

> Bot myhte I geten, as ye tolde,
> So mochel that mi lady wolde
> Me fede with hir glad semblant,
> Though me lacke al the remenant,
> Yit scholde I somdel ben abeched
> And for the time wel refreched.
> (VI. 705-710)

He subtly indicates that he would 'somdel' be satisfied if his lady looked on him favourably, but that a greater degree of satisfaction would be even more to his liking.

Genius urges him to confess his love-delicacy. Amans complies by enumerating with what "smale lustes" (VI. 377) he manages to assuage his desire. The first is through sight, the second through hearing, the third through his thoughts. When he is going toward the place where he is to meet his lady, his "yhe . . . / Beginth to hungre" and he fills the time with imagining his lady's beauties. The eye is personified, as if the lover has no control over what he sees. He describes only the features that "without wyte / He mai se naked ate leste" (VI. 780-781): her "yhen lich an hevene," the "nase strauht and evene," the "rode upon the cheke," the "neeke round and clene," and the "handes faire and whyte." From the face he moves to the body:

> He [sc. the eye] seth hire schapthe forth withal,
> Hire bodi round, hire middel smal,

So wel begon with good array,
Which passeth al the lust of Maii. . . .
(VI. 785-788)

The climax of delight lies in the "port and the manere / . . . of hire wommanysshe chere" (VI. 793-94).

When his eyes cannot satisfy his longing, then his ears delight his heart. He listens with rapture to tales of his lady's wisdom and goodness. In addition he may listen to her delightful speech full of truth and "good desport":

For as the wyndes of the South
Ben most of alle debonaire,
So whan hir list to speke faire
The vertu of hire goodly speche
Is verraily myn hertes leche.
(VI. 862-66)

When she sings a carol he thinks he is in paradise, and the sound of her voice is to him a "blisse of hevene" (VI. 874).

The delights provided by the eyes and ears are supplemented by thought,

. . . which has evere his pottes hote
Of love buillende on the fyr
With fantasie and with desir,
Of which er this fulofte he fedde
Min herte, whan I was abedde;
(VI. 914-918).

Thought brings to him "every syhte and every word / Of lust" (VI. 920-921), which his eyes and ears have experienced. In the Latin sidenote he calls thought cogitatus, closely resembling the word Andreas Capellanus uses to define cupidinous love.[17] All the delights Amans experiences are

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17 De amore, ed. Trojel, I.1 (p. 3): "Amor est

momentary, however, and fail to give real and lasting satisfaction:

> I licke hony on the thorn,
> And as who seith, upon the bridel
> I chiewe, so that al is ydel
> As in effect the fode I have.
> (VI. 928-931)

Nevertheless he continues to try this means of satisfaction as medicine for his wound, and looks forward to the day when all his desires may be consummated,

> Til I mai have the grete feste,
> Which al myn hunger myhte areste.
> (VI. 937-938)

Amans has a vivid imagination where love is concerned. He uses it only to soften his desire temporarily, until the 'grete feste'. There is every indication that by this he means sexual satisfaction. Genius calls the delights "wonder smale," echoing Amans' own description, but then quickly adds that all the bodily delights endanger the soul. As an example he tells the tale of Dives and Lazarus. Dives, because he sought "the bodily delices" in his "lust jolif" (VI. 1052-53), went to hell to suffer eternal pain, while Lazarus, because he "hadde gret penance" in his lifetime, went to heaven. As a further example, Genius adds a tale about the 'delicacie' of Nero, of whom he says that "With every lust he was begon" (VI. 1210), especially toward women:

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passio quaedam innata procedens ex visione et immoderata cogitatione formae alterius sexus, ob quam aliquis super omnia cupit alterius potiri amplexibus. . . ." (italics added).

Bot most above alle erthli thinges
Of wommen unto the likinges
Nero sette al his hole herte,
For that lust scholde him noght asterte,
(VI. 1213-1216).

Nero spared "nouther wif ne maide" in satisfying his lust. Amans has not sunk so low, but Genius warns him of the dangers that his delight in sensual matters entails:

For evere yit it hath so ferd
Delicacie in loves cas
Withoute reson is and was;
(VI. 1228-1230)

Genius finally emphasizes that 'delicacie' in love loosens the reins of the lover's will to the extent that he may endanger his very soul:

What lust it is that he ordeigneth,
Ther is no mannes miht restreigneth,
And of the godd takth he non hiede:
Bot laweles withoute drede,
His pourpos for he wolde achieve
Ayeins the pointz of the believe,
The tempteth hevene and erthe and helle,
(VI. 1253-59).

This injuction summarizes the logical end of Amans' seemingly innocent indulgence in his fantasies, and underscores the nature of his ultimate desire. The lover who seeks to fulfill his desires takes no heed of God, or of the laws of society or the church. Any means seem justifiable to gain his carnal object, and he takes heed only of his selfish desires. Amans' quest for satisfaction seems innocent enough, but it has all the earmarks of cupiditas in its narrower sense of "sexual desire".

Amans seeks satisfaction within the context of the court of Venus. As has already been noted, he has been her

servant for many years, and now prays for "wele after wo". This context further characterizes his love-longing as cupiditas. Venus and Cupid are both consistent proponents of carnal love, except at the end of the poem, when Venus momentarily assumes the role of the Blessed Virgin. This change of role, however, comes after Amans has been rejected as a suitable love, and indicates a measure of sympathy on her part, and a recognition of another kind of love.[18] With that exception, she represents sexual desire, and those who have gained entry into her court have this as their main goal.

Cupid and Venus do not play major roles in the Confessio Amantis . They provide the setting and incentive for the confession, but after Genius has initiated the shrift, they play no active role in the interplay between the priest and Amans, although they remain in the background. Genius' first task, as priest of Venus, is to carry out her injunctions. A picture may be gained from the role they play in the exempla dealing specifically with love, however, and from Genius' occasional comments on his relationship with them.

Cupid plays a minor role in the love allegory. He looks down in anger at the prostrate lover, and as he passes him, throws one of his fiery darts through the lover's heart. At the end of the poem he removes the dart, and

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18 D.W. Robertson Jr. discusses the appearance of a 'good' and a 'bad' Venus in "The Subject of the De amore", with reference to patristic literature (cf. p. 66, n. 9 above).

quickly disappears. Throughout the confession he appears in the exempla and in Amans' comments on his own love as an initiator of sexual love, and as a cause for pain. In the tale of Machaire and Canace Cupid "bad hem ferst to kesse" (III. 169), and then leaves their further instruction to Nature; but Cupid causes them to take the first step. In the tale of Geta and Amphitrion he turns the love of Almeene for Geta, to whom she had been "assured be weie of love" (II. 2467), toward Amphytrion while Geta is away, by permitting him to counterfeit Geta's voice, so that he can come to lie with Almeene. He entraps lovers by casting fires on them, as in the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe (III. 1352), or by wounding prospective lovers with his fiery darts, as in the case of Amans, or in the tale of Rosiphelee (IV. 1274). The fiery darts serve as a metaphor for the passion he kindles in those he traps.

Cupid sets the world in disarray, suggesting a close connection with the discordant love of the Prologue:

> Bot this I se, on daies nou
> The blinde god, I wot noght hou,
> Cupido, which of love is lord,
> He set the thinges in discord,
> That thei that lest to love entende
> Fulofte he wol hem yive and sende
> Most of his grace; (IV. 1731-1737).

To this may be compared Cupid's action toward Troilus (I. 206-310). Wherever the god of love involves himself, the world is turned "up-so-doun". The god of love is blind, as is humorously emphasized when he gropes for

the dart in Amans' heart.

Gower does not draw a sympathetic picture of Cupid, although his role occasionally becomes more beneficial. The tale of Iphis, in Book IV, illustrates how Cupid made it possible for two young people to love naturally. A king, desiring a son, was deceived into believing that a daughter born to him was actually a son. This child, Iphis, was betrothed at a youthful age to a duke's daughter, and as they became older, they began to "use / thing which to hem was al unknow" (IV. 486-87), constrained thereto by Nature. Cupid, seeing their plight, took pity on the youthful lovers, and at a suitable time transformed Iphis into a man, so that Nature's laws might be followed naturally. On the whole, however, his actions tend to bring pain and sorrow to lovers, not relief.

Venus is not pictured quite so unsympathetically as Cupid, but Gower leaves no doubt that the love she represents has sexual union as its ultimate goal. She is called "blind" by Thisbe (III. 1462), but hears Pygmaleon's pleas to breathe life into the statue he has made (IV. 419-423). Amans, in his first prayer to her, calls her "queen of loves cure" (I. 132), and asks her to heal the wound he suffers in love. She plays the role of physician in Book VIII, when she anoints the wound left by Cupid's fiery dart with her own special ointment. The last act is one of pity, just as her answer to Pygmaleon's prayer is given out of pity, and for his great persistence. Her role in

such affairs is to make it possible for lovers to satisfy their longings.

The picture of a benevolent Venus is contrasted by a less savoury one. She is reputed to have been born from Saturn's genitals, after Jupiter threw them into the ocean (V. 859). On the occasion of Pirithous' marriage to Ipotacie, she supplies the guests with a love potion,

> Of thilke cuppe which exciteth
> The lust wherinne a man deliteth,
> (VI. 509-510).

The potion, taken in addition to Bacchus' wine, causes the centaurs so completely to lose their reason that they abduct the bride in order to fulfill their lusts. Venus inspired lustful thoughts in Phoebus' heart, so that he is driven to rape Leucothoe, although she punishes him for his "covoitise" (V. 6713-6783); and she aids Paris in the abduction of Helen, with its fearful consequences for Troy (V. 7484-7590).

Her own background is not free of blame either. While she was the wife of Vulcan, the god of fire, she was caught in flagrante delicto with Mars, the god of war. She is guilty of incest, as well as adultery, and Gower uses this effectively in characterizing the nature of the love she offers. In the discussion of the pagan gods, Genius leaves to the end the account of how Venus and Cupid came to be called the gods of love. When Amans presses him on the matter he says that he has left it for shame, because he is her own priest. Then he tells of Venus' promiscuity:

. . . . in sondri place
Diverse men felle into grace,
And such a lusti lif sche ladde,
That sche diverse children hadde,
Nou on be this, nou on be that.
(V. 1391-95)

When she could find no other men, she conceived Cupid by her own brother Jupiter. As if this were not sufficient, Cupid also became enamoured of his mother, and she in turn of him:

So whan thei weren bothe al one,
As he which yhen hadde none
To se reson, his Mother kiste;
And sche also that nothing wiste
Bot that which unto lust belongeth
To ben hire love him underfongeth.
Thus was he blind, and sche unwys:
(V. 1411-1417).

Cupid is called the god of love because he dared to love his mother. Genius' condemnation of Venus is more prolonged. In order to defend herself (from charges of immoral behaviour, one suspects), she decreed that any woman might have any man she wishes. She also becomes the originator of prostitution. Genius summarizes her behaviour in ironic fashion:

Sche was to every man felawe,
And hild the lust of thilke lawe,
Which Venus of hirself began;
Wherof that sche the name wan,
Of love and eke of gentilesse,
Of worldes lust and of plesance.
(V. 1437-1443)

The love which Venus offers is devoted to complete sexual abandonment, and is clearly to be associated with cupiditas. Gower emphasizes the condemnation by dramatically separating Genius' report of her incestuous promiscuity from the

remainder of the discussion of pagan gods.

Both her own and her son's actions are described with the word 'lust'. Venus puts away all restraint of love and "fond to lust a weie" (V.1390). She understands nothing except what "unto lust belongeth" (V. 1415), and she thinks her "lustes fonde", that is, she believes them to be pleasurable. This emphasizes her purely sensuous nature. Amans is a part of her court, and desires satisfaction of a kind that only she and her retainers can provide. So long as he remains in her service his quest remains a desire for sexual gratification and libidinous pleasure, and hence cupiditas.

Amans' quest is contrasted by the picture of a more desirable and reasonable love, as it is presented by Genius.[19] He plays a dual role in the Confessio Amantis. As a priest of Venus he is instructed to hear Amans' confession, and in that role he is a spokesman for the same love that Venus represents. At the same time he fulfills the office of the priesthood, and is bound to instruct the lover on all the vices, not only as they pertain to love. As priest of Venus he is representative

19 It is generally agreed that Gower borrowed the name of the confessor from the Roman de la Rose, although he plays a far more active role in the Confessio Amantis. Cf. George D. Economou, "The Character of Genius in Alain de Lille, Jean de Meun, and John Gower," Chaucer Review, IV (1970), 203-210. For discussion of Genius in relation to classical literature see E.C. Knowlton, "The Allegorical Figure Genius," Classical Philology, XV (1920), 380-384; and idem, "Genius as an Allegorical Figure," MLN, XXXIX (1924), 89-95.

of cupiditas, but the order of Priesthood makes him a spokesman for caritas, bound to condemn unlicensed sexual love. Genius is a spokesman for reason and moderation in all things and condemns the actions that go contrary to the laws of charity, even when this entails repudiating Venus. He is capable of presenting the multifold facets of love, and sins committed in the name of love, and is admirably suited to confess a lover seeking recognition for his long service in Venus' court. At the same time his arguments gradually lead to an exposition of his real interests in the confession, which is to show Amans the folly of his quest, until he drops his pretense at the end of the poem, and firmly points out the way to caritas.

His introduction in Book I is delightfully ambiguous. He admits his affinity with Venus, and adds:

> Bot natheles for certein skile
> I mot algate and nedes wile
> Noght only make my spekynges
> Of love, bot of othre thinges,
> That touchen to the cause of vice.
> (I. 237-241)

This second task belongs to "thoffice of Prest" (I. 242-243), and its object is to provide the lover with evidence to inform his conscience. Genius reiterates his task as priest of love:

> Bot of conclusion final
> Conclude I wol in special
> For love, whos servaunt I am,
> And why the cause is that I cam.
> (I. 249-252)

He repeats this assertion in connection with Venus. These

lines may be interpreted in two ways. "Love" in English may refer, among other things, to love of God, to love for one's fellow man, or to sexual impulses. The distinction between caritas and cupiditas suggests itself here. Alan of Lille, for example, defines amor, a word as ambiguous as the English "love", as both caritas and cupiditas.[20] Genius may here be referring either to Venus, or to the Christian God, who is also called Love. That it is the latter, is strengthened by the use of the words 'conclusion final' which suggests a reference to the end of the confession. There Genius advises Amans to turn from his quest, which can only lead to transient happiness, and to follow a different love, with permanent rewards, that is, caritas.

While Genius remains nominally faithful to Venus, he does not miss an opportunity to instruct Amans on matters that have no relationship with Venus and her court, or with Amans' quest. In all his teachings he remains an advocate for reason's supremacy over the will, and "moderation in all things" is his constant advice to the lover. This contrasts sharply with the love represented by Venus, where abandonment to sensual pleasure is the chief goal; this same supposition lies behind Amans' quest. Amans denies the necessity of sleep for a lover, maintaining that he dreams things he regrets when he wakes. Genius

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20 Alan of Lille, Liber in distinctionibus dictionum theologicalium, PL CCX, 699, s.v. amor; quoted by Robertson, "The Subject of the De amore", p. 148.

replies:

> Mi Sone, certes thou seist soth,
> Bot only that it helpeth kinde
> Somtyme, in Physique as I finde,
> Whan it is take be mesure:
> Bot he which can no Slep mesure
> Upon the reule as it belongeth,
> Ful ofte of sodein chance he fongeth
> Such infortune that him grieveth.
> (IV. 3303-3309)

Amans loves so desperately that he is willing to forgo all sleep. Genius does not deny his assertions, but points out that sleep can be very beneficial when taken in moderation.

Of the avaricious man he says pointedly:

> To seie how such a man hath good,
> Who so that reson understod,
> It is impropreliche seid,
> For good hath him and halt him teid,
> That he ne gladeth noght withal,
> Bot is unto his good a thral,
> (V. 49-54).

Reason tells Genius that the commonly held belief of the rich man's happiness is contrary to the truth. In love, and in all things, he strongly advises that goals should not be pursued with undue haste:

> To hasten is noght worth a kerse;
> Thing that a man mai noght achieve,
> That mai noght wel be done at Eve,
> It mot abide til the morwe.
> (III. 1652-55)

As an example he points to Pyramus, who with great haste drew his sword and slew himself when he discovered Thisbe's bloodstained veil on the ground.

Genius is particularly strong in his condemnation of war. As he explains in Book V, it entered the world through the covetousness of men. Even the Crusades are not spared

his condemnation. When Amans asks whether they are lawful exceptions to the commandment against homicide, he replies:

> . . . Sone myn
> To preche and soffre for the feith,
> That have I herd the gospell seith;
> Bot forto slee, that hiere I noght.
> Crist with his ogbne deth hath boght
> Alle othre men, and made hem fre,
> In tokne of parfit charite;
> (III. 2490-96).

No form of killing is permitted according to the law of charity, not even if the intentions are to increase the church. When Christians first began to use war as a means of spreading the gospel, many fell away from the faith. In Genius' view there can be no justification for homicide, whether it occurs out of malice, or in war, or for a good cause.

The man who is guilty of killing another is "noght resonable", and behaves far worse than the beasts. Genius uses Alexander as a supreme example of "unreason":

> He hadde set al his entente,
> So as fortune with him wente,
> That reson nihte him non governe,
> Bot of his will he was so sterne,
> That al the world he overran
> And what him list he tok and wan.
> (III. 2441-2446)

Alexander, in spite of all the profit that his desire for worldly domination brought him, was "most sodeinliche . . . deceived" (III. 2456), and died ignominiously from poisoning. At the end of the Confessio Amantis Genius counsels Amans to turn from his sinful path, and to follow the law of reason:

> Yit it is time to withdrawe,
> And set thin herte under that lawe,
> The which of reson is governed
> And noght of will.
>
> (VIII, 2133-36)

This summarizes Genius' whole intent and outlook in the poem. Ostensibly he is a priest of Venus, but nowhere does he counsel the kind of lawless licentiousness that is associated with the court of the gods of love.

Genius does not totally condemn sexuality, however, although he points out to Amans that the love he is pursuing is sinful and should be avoided. Sexuality, in Genius' view, belongs to the realm of marriage; on this point he is explicit. He points out that Venus is bound to follow the laws of Cupid, so that her followers may not avoid the love of paramours, if they "wole hire thonk deserve" (IV. 1468). This kind of love leads to much strife in the world, and is continually filled with 'janglinge' and with 'fals Envie'; it must moreover remain secret if it is to be successful.[21] These strictures, however, do not apply to love in marriage:

> Bot thilke love is wel at ese,
> Which set is upon mariage;
> For that dar schewen the visage
> In alle places openly.
>
> (IV. 1476-79)

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21 Cf. Andreas Capellanus, II.1 (p. 239): Qui suum igitur cupit amorem diu retinere illaesum, eum sibi maxime praecavere oportet, ut amor extra suos terminos nemini propaletur, sed omnibus reservetur occultus. (Parry: The man who wants to keep his love affair for a long time should above all things be careful not to let it be known to any outsider, but should keep it hidden from everybody.)

He finds it a great marvel that maidens do not hasten to "that ilke feste, /Wherof the love is al honeste" (IV. 1483-84). Instead of longing for marriage, they set all their desires on enjoying their sexuality before they are married. The 'honeste' love he speaks of here is used on a number of occasions to designate love in marriage, most notably when he tells the tale of Apollonius of Tyre, whose love for his wife is called 'honeste'.

The opposition of caritas and cupiditas operates as the controlling theme through the two chief characters involved in the confession. Venus and Cupid, from whom Amans desires grace, are characterized by their sensuality; wherever they operate explicitly in the tales, they act toward the realization of sexual pleasures. Amans' desired relationship with his lady is gradually revealed as the confession progresses. Initially he is an unfortunate lover, grieving because his lady will not return even the slightest sign of love for him. In Book VI he is explicit in his description of the real nature of the satisfaction he craves. He imagines having his lady naked by his side, and in various ways expresses his regret at not being in the position of consummating his love in any way. Amans' desire, expressed through continual hyperbole and excessive dwelling on sensuous detail, is contrasted by the teachings and remonstrances of Genius, who advocates reason and moderation in all things, and who may be seen as a spokesman for the normative values of caritas, in spite of his

position as priest of the goddess of earthly love, since he repudiates her standards whenever they do not accord with those imposed on him by the order of Priesthood, of which he is a member. The dual nature of love is presented in the love allegory through the opposed goals of Amans and Genius. It now remains to discuss the operation of the moral statements in the dramatic framework in Gower's use of the tales as exempla, and in the digressions from the main theme of love.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE EXEMPLA AND THE DIGRESSIONS IN BOOK VII

Gower is probably better remembered for his consummate skill as a story-teller than for his moral focus. From the time that Chaucer called him 'moral' Gower, he was considered a most eloquent exponent of moral values. Caxton, for example, writing in The Book of Curtesye, praises Gower's "vertuous tretie" and speaks of his "sentence sette so frutously" that it will give the reader "corage".[1] This sentiment was echoed by other fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers, but when the connotation of the word 'moral' changed pejoratively during the eighteenth century Gower came to be considered with some disdain. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, however, his skill as a narrator has been rediscovered.

The moral emphasis found in the Prologue and Epilogue, and expressed through the opposition of Amans and Genius, carries over into the exempla. This is evident when the tales are compared with their sources. Even where this is not possible, however, the moral direction of the tale

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1 Ed. F.J. Furnivall, E.E.T.S., E.S. No. 3 (London, 1868), p. 32; quoted in Fisher, p. 8.

remains clearly connected with the sin it is meant to exemplify. In the case of some particularly well-told tales, such as the tale of Florent,[2] of Constance,[3] or of Rosiphelee,[4] to name just a few, the moral lesson they are meant to illustrate takes a secondary place to the tale itself due to the skill with which Gower tells them. Even in those tales, however, he states clearly at the end what he considers to be the message of the tale. The reader becomes caught up in the tale by the artistic superiority Gower displays, and only when Genius draws the "sentence" from the tale is he pulled back to the main subject matter of the Confessio Amantis.

Gower's morality, expressed through the duality of love, operates at the level of the individual tales, and forms the principle by which he transforms his sources to fit the matter under discussion. The principle does not operate in terms of a duality or of stated oppositions, as it does in the moral or dramatic frameworks. Instead, the predominance of either caritas or cupiditas, or qualities associated with them such as reason and will or moderation and excess, becomes the dominant guiding

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2 I. 1407-1861; told by Chaucer as the Wife of Bath's Tale; discussed by Maria Wickert, Studien (cf. Chapter I above, p. 8, n. 12).

3 II. 587-1612; told by Chaucer as the Man of Law's Tale; discussed by Arno Esch (cf. Chapter I above, p. 8, n.12).

4 IV. 1245-1446. A similar tale is told by Andreas Capellanus, De Amore, ed. Trojel, I.6(G), (pp. 155-172).

principle. In the love allegory the primary focus is on the unreasonableness of Amans' quest in his search for sexual fulfillment, characterized as cupiditas. He is opposed at every point by Genius, who is a spokesman for reason in love and other matters. The duality in the confession thus revolves around the ordering of will and reason; will in control of Amans' quest is opposed by the reason in Genius' replies.

In the tales Gower does not present two opposing principles as he does in the moral framework or in the confession, but emphasizes one aspect to the detriment of the other. The moral direction is indicated by Genius' preamble to each tale, which sets it in the context of the particular sin he wishes to illustrate. The moral centre of the tale takes a variety of forms. Those that illustrate the sins show a predominance of excesses in the characters which relates to an overly selfish act, or an excess of pride or anger, leading in some way to their downfall or punishment. The tale of Apollonius of Tyre (VIII. 271-2008) is a good illustration of this principle. Antiochus is guilty of an excess of sexual desire, causing him to violate even his own daughter. Apollonius, on the other hand, is guided by reason, and never steps outside the bounds of propriety. Antiochus is killed by lightning as punishment for his excessive cupidity, while Apollonius eventually is restored to wife, daughter, and kingdom, as a reward for his control and patience. These examples

may easily be multiplied. Rosiphelee, for example, guilty of idleness in love, has a vision in which she sees a number of ladies forced to carry horses' bridles about their necks, because they ignored the demands of love. In this case the moral centre takes the form of an excess of self-love on Rosiphelee's part, which leads to idleness in love.

Many exempla do not deal directly with love, but illustrate the particular sin in a general way. Often Gower introduces these with a specific reference indicating that the subject has no direct bearing on love, but is to serve as an exemplum of the vice in general. He tells the story of Nebuchadnezzar's punishment as an example of vain-glory (I. 2785-3042). When Genius introduces the tale he specifies that it is not directly related to love:

> Now herkne a tale that is soth:
> Thogh it be noght of loves kinde,
> A gret ensample thou shalt finde
> This veine gloire forto fle,
> Which is so full of vanite.
> (I. 2780-84)

Although the tale he is about to tell is not directly related to the subject of the confession, it is nevertheless to serve as a warning against the sin of vain glory. Genius explicitly states the king's sins, emphasizing the excesses of which he is guilty:

> He was so full of veine gloire,
> That he ne hadde no memoire
> That ther was eny good bot he,
> For pride of his prosperite;
> (I. 2799-2802).

Because Nebuchadnezzar takes such pride in his own goodness and wisdom he is forced to lead an animal-like existence for seven years, eating the grass in the field, and living in subjection to the natural elements. His excessive pride, revealed through his vainglory, causes him to be brought low in punishment. Genius concludes with a reiteration of the moral of the tale:

> Forthi, my Sone, tak good hiede
> So forto lede thi manhiede,
> That thou ne be noght lich a beste.
> Bot if thi lif schal ben honeste,
> Thou must humblesce take on honde,
> For thanne myht thou siker stonde:
> (I. 3043-48).

Nebuchadnezzar's pride led to his humiliating experience. Genius counsels Amans against that sin, lest he also become like a beast. Then he makes the lesson directly applicable to love:

> And forto speke it otherwise,
> A proud man can no love assise;
> For thogh a womman wolde him plese,
> His Pride can noght ben at ese.
> (I. 3049-52)

The moral centre of the tale is Nebuchadnezzar's excess of pride, followed by an appropriate punishment. Gower then makes a direct application of this lesson to the main subject of the confession, by reiterating the message in Genius' summary at the end of the tale as it relates to love.

In Amans' quest the desire for consummation of love is characterized as covetousness, that is, cupiditas, and Genius' rejoinders, because they reveal reason in control,

are a part of the operation of charity. In the tales that illustrate the sins and their branches, an excess of passion, whether for possessions or for sexual gratification, forms the moral centre of each of the exempla. Those illustrating the virtues (of which there are only a few, described as antidotes for the sins) take on an opposite direction. The fruits of charity, expressed through such concepts as self-restraint, placing others before self, or obeying the laws of charity in various ways, form the moral centre of these tales.

Gower's use of exempla to teach a moral lesson follows established medieval convention.[5] The technique was developed independently by the Hindus and the Hebrews, and carried over into medieval times through the example of Christ's use of parables to illustrate his teachings. During the early Middle Ages they were used extensively by various religious and didactic writers in treatises and in sermons. Gregory the Great, for example, used the lives of Italian saints and holy men to illustrate the virtuous way of life in his Dialogues. During the high Middle Ages exempla were widely used in homilies as illustrations, both in order to stimulate interest, and to teach. Many collections of exempla, both with and without extensive allegorizations, have come down in manuscript form, drawn from the Bible,

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5 For a detailed discussion of the exempla in England, see J.A. Mosher, The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England (New York: Columbia, 1911).

from ancient and medieval writers, from the compiler's own experiences, and from histories and chronicles. They took a great variety of forms, often being told in a few short sentences. Some exempla were so well known that merely indicating the opening sentence sufficed to recall the particular example to the user of the compilation (Mosher, p. 14).

Gower is one of a long list of writers who used exempla to illustrate moral teachings. He differs somewhat from others, however, in that he cast them into literary form. He tells his tales with two distinct purposes in mind. The first is for the delight of telling a tale. This may be seen, for example, in the Tale of Constance, which he tells with great delight and at great length. At the same time he keeps his moral purpose before him. Each tale is set in the context of a particular moral teaching, which dictates the direction the tale will take. The tales are introduced by a brief description of the lesson they are to illustrate, and conclude with a restatement of the lesson.

Both the introduction and the conclusion of the tales have a formulaic character. In the preamble Genius generally summarizes the description of the sin, then adds, "Whereof I finde ensample write . . ." (III. 1329), or ". . . wherof I rede / A tale, and tak therof good hiede" (VI. 137-138); or he may say: ". . . Wherof I finde, as thou schalt wite, / To this purpos a tale write" (II. 95-96). The general pattern is for Genius to state the nature of the

sin and in the same (syntactic) breath to add some variation of the above formula; or he will state the formula, then add the sin it is meant to illustrate, joined syntactically to the formula. Frequently he adds that the 'ensample' is 'good to wite', or for Amans' 'avisement', clearly indicating the didactic purpose of the tale.

The conclusion of a tale almost invariably takes the form of an injunction to Amans to heed what has been said, expressed by means of a formulaic expression. He ends the exempla illustrating anger with the words, "Lo, thus, my Sone, Ovide hath write" (III. 381). The tale of Telaphus and Teucer, illustrating homicide, concludes with the words, "Lo, this ensample is mad therfore / That thou miht take remembrance / My Sone" (III. 2718-20). The tale of Demephon and Phyllis, an exemplum for forgetfulness, begins with the word 'lo', and includes a reference to written authority: "Lo thus my Sone, miht thou wite / Ayein this vice how it is write" (IV. 879-880). A similar technique is used to end the tale of Rosiphelee: "Lo, Sone, hier miht thou taken hiede, / How ydelnesse is forto drede" (IV. 1947-48). Gower often introduces his moral comment with 'lo' or 'forthi', alerting the reader and Amans to a didactic conclusion. He tells the tale of Vulcan and Venus to illustrate the sin of jealousy among lovers, and begins his conclusion: "Forthi mi Sone, in thin office / Be war that thou be noght jelous" (V. 726-7). In each case he ends the tale with a repetition of the lesson it is meant

to teach. The formula takes the form of a word such as 'lo' or 'forthi', followed by a specific application of the tale to love addressed to Amans.

Each tale is set in its own framework of moral lesson, just as all the tales are set in the frame of the dialogue between Amans and Genius, and this in turn is set in the context of the moral social comments of the Prologue and Epilogue. Time and space do not permit an examination of each of the tales to determine whether the themes of the individual tales are suited to the moral frame in which they are placed. By introducing each tale with a statement that he is going to tell an 'ensaumple', Gower sets the pattern for the moral direction of the tale. The reader expects that the emphasis will be on the particular sins that are under discussion. This expectation is rarely disappointed.

The tale of the Three Questions (I. 3067-3402) is an exemplum for both pride and its antidote humility. Genius introduces the tale with standard formula. He identifies Pride as the "werst vice of alle" (I. 3057), and continues:

> Wherof, so as it is befalle,
> The tale I thenke of a Cronique
> To telle, if that it mai thee like,
> So that thou myht humblesce suie
> And ek the vice of Pride eschuie,
> Wherof the Gloire is fals and vein;
> (I. 3058-63).

He intends to tell a tale so that Amans may learn to follow humility and to avoid pride. He adds that pride is held "in desdeign" by God himself; the proud may rise for a

time, but will inevitably fall down and be overthrown.

The tale admirably illustrates Gower's moral principle at work, in both a direct and an indirect way. Indirectly the king, who asks the questions out of pride in his wisdom, is brought down to a knowledge of humility, and is in fact humiliated. The answers to the three questions contain lessons on humility and pride which teach Genius' lesson directly. The tale opens with several references to the young king's wisdom and pride:

> A king whilom was yong and wys,
> The which sette of his wit gret pris.
> (I. 3068-69)

His whole purpose in life is to "finde and seke" knowledge, and for this purpose he takes great delight in seeking out wise men to whom he may oppose his wisdom. No one in the whole kingdom can compete with him, except one knight, who answers every question that the king puts to him. He is envious of the knight's ability, and plots to bring down the knight,

> so that the name
> And of wisdom the hihe fame
> Toward himself he wolde winne.
> (I. 3086-89)

The young king, proud of his vast knowledge, and envious that there seems to be someone who equals him in wisdom, plots to bring about the knight's "confusioun", so that the name and the renown of wisdom might accrue all to himself.

He asks three difficult philosophical questions of the knight, which he is to answer in three weeks' time, with

the death penalty if he fails to provide the correct answers. The three questions are riddle-like in their difficulty. The first appears to be a paradox: What thing is least in need of help, and yet men help it more than anything else? The second appears to be similar: What is worth most, and costs least to produce? The third reverses the second: What costs the most, is worth the least, and causes nothing but loss? The knight is greatly disturbed by the king's unreasonable demands and goes home grieving for his own life and that of his family, firmly convinced that he will be unable to answer the questions within the time limit imposed by the king. His youngest daughter, seeing her father's grief, begs him to share it with her. When she hears what the king has demanded, she proposes to go with her father when the time comes, and to answer the questions in his place.

At the end of the three weeks the knight returns to the court with his daughter, and to everyone's amazement proceeds to entrust his life to her answers. She answers the questions correctly, to the king's great surprise. To the first she replies that the thing that needs least help and is most aided by men is the earth, since men assiduously cultivate it every spring, although the earth produces goods in abundance without men's aid, and becomes the home of everything which dies. The direct lessons of the necessity of humility and the need to avoid pride are contained in the answers to the other two questions. To the first, what is

worth the most and costs the least to keep, the answer is humility, because the "hihe trinite" saw fit to send his son to the earth to die for men, and to humble himself. A direct link is drawn with caritas. Christ descended to the earth out of the "hise love" which he bore to men. He chose Mary as his mother because of the virtue which "bodeth pes". Elsewhere in the Confessio Amantis Gower points out that charity is the source of peace in the world (III. 2251-2362). It is furthermore linked indirectly with his premise in the Prologue, that wars are caused by a lack of charity (Prol. 168-171). In this tale the daughter further points out that humility costs least of all things to keep because it keeps war away from the land and sets all men at rest.

Pride is the answer to the question of what costs the most, and has the least worth. It costs the most, because it causes the loss of heaven. Lucifer out of pride rebelled against God, which cost him dearly. "whan he for Pride hath heaven lost" (I. 302). Adam, too, lost paradise when he assented to Eve out of pride and covetousness. In Chapter II it was briefly pointed out that there was some dispute among medieval theologians as to which was the chief and the first of all sins. Both pride and covetousness were adduced as the reason for Adam's fall: pride because he trusted in his own judgment, and covetousness, because he desired to be like God in wisdom. These matters find a direct expression in the tale of the Three Questions.

The moral teachings of the tale are presented directly in the answers to the last two questions. The lessons are also presented indirectly. The king, as has already been pointed out, tries to cause the knight's downfall out of pride in his own wisdom. The knight, on the other hand, is a symbol of humility, because he does not hesitate to trust his young daughter to give the right answer; at no point does he question her ability to save his life. When she comes to her father in the garden, to ask him the cause of his grief, she kneels before him "with humble hert" (I. 3146). In the presence of the king, moreover, she evinces a humble attitude to one so highly placed, although she is resolute in demanding that the king carry out his promise. She cleverly points out to him at the end, after he has raised her father to an earldom, that now he can marry her, showing that she is very much aware of her proper station in life. As the daughter of a mere "bachelir" she cannot marry him, but as an earl's daughter she has that right. She remains humble throughout the tale. The young king, on the other hand, is ironically humiliated for his initial pride. The tale of the Three Questions is thus a fitting example to stand at the end of a discussion of pride, as an illustration both of the sin and of the remedy for the sin. Gower develops the lesson of the story through the action, through the characters, and through the direct answers to the questions.

Genius concludes the tale with an application of its

message to the matter under discussion, first pointing out the eternal consequences of pride, then the rewards of humility:

> Lo now, my Sone, as thou myht hiere,
> Of al this thing to my matiere
> Bot on I take, and that is Pride,
> To whom no grace mai betide:
> (I. 3403-3406),

Pride caused man to fall from heaven and to lose paradise. Humility, on the other hand, confers many rewards, as may be seen from the tale, for the daughter received again her father's life, and "wan the kinges love". Then Genius once more summarizes the lesson, directly applying it to love:

> Forthi, my Sone, if thou wolt love,
> It sit thee wel to leve Pride
> And take Humblesce upon thi side;
> The more of grace thou shalt gete.
> (I. 3422-25)

When the tale does not relate directly to love, Genius returns the discussion to the immediate matter at hand in his concluding remarks. The tale of the Three Questions does not deal with matters of love, but provides an excellent exemplum for the sins of pride and humility in general terms. Genius does not lose sight of the main subject matter of the confession, that is, Amans' need to be shriven in matters of love. At the same time he can fulfill his second purpose of instructing the lover in the nature of the vices and virtues as they apply to other areas of life.

The tale of the Three Questions shows clearly how

Gower suits the tale to the didactic context. The source of the tale has not been determined,[6] however, so that it is impossible to make a comparison with the original to determine how Gower changes his material to suit it to the context. Many of his sources for other tales are known, however, from the opening references in many tales. Source studies are in themselves of little value, unless they shed some light on the artistic processes of the author. In Gower's case, they show how he adapts the source to the sin he wishes to illustrate.

Of the more than one hundred tales in the Confessio Amantis, thirty-seven are taken from Ovid. Of these twenty-six are from the Metamorphoses, five from the Heroides, four from the Fasti, and one each from the Ars Amatoria and the Remedia contra Amorem.[7] Gower also borrowed extensively from Ovid's writings in the Vox Clamantis, as Eric Stockton conclusively demonstrates.[8] In many case in that work he transposes complete lines from scattered works, sometimes changing lines felicitously to create his own effect. All this indicates Gower's intimate acquaintance with Ovid's writings.

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6 Cf. Macaulay, in his note to I. 3067 ff., Works I, 478.

7 See Appendix for a list of tales derived from Ovid.

8 Eric Stockton, trans., The Major Latin Works of John Gower (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1962), Introduction, pp. 26-28.

Ovid's influence ranged widely in the later Middle Ages, a fact which caused Ludwig Traube to call the period after 1050 the aetas Ovidiana, as compared with the preceding centuries which he called the aetas Vergiliana.[9] Many adaptations of Ovid were made during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, of which the Ovide Moralisé,[10] a rhymed version of the Metamorphoses, complete with full allegorical interpretations, is perhaps one of the most famous. Ovid's influence is also felt through his writings on love, in their adaptations both as works for moral instructions and as inspiration for erotic secular poetry, such as the Carmina Burana. Most important for our purpose, however, is the fact that his writings formed a universal sourcebook for later medieval writers, who gave new literary currency to the old stories.

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe in Book III, taken from Book IV of the Metamorphoses,[11] illustrates to what extent Gower transformed his source to suit his purposes without

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9 Quoted in E.K. Rand, Ovid (New York: Longmans, 1928), pp. 112-113.
For a brief assessment of Ovid's importance to the Middle Ages see Franco Munari, Ovid im Mittelalter (Zürich: Artemis Verlags-AG, 1960); cf. Rand, Ovid, pp. 112-149.

10 Ed. C. De Boer, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel XXI (Repr. Wiesbaden: Dr. Marin Sandig oHG, 1966).

11 Ed. and trans. F.J. Miller, Loeb Classical Library, Nos. 42 and 43 (London: Heinemann, 1971). Unless otherwise noted all translations are taken from this editon.

altering the basic story.[12] He retains some details from Ovid, adds some of his own, and in general omits much of the tale that has no bearing on the main theme, yet he does this without changing the basic outline of the tale. The changes Gower makes are calculated to change the story into an exemplum for foolish haste. He successfully accomplishes this feat, without losing the pathos of young love brought to sudden death which Ovid presented.

Gower retains the basic story from the Metamorphoses of two young people, children of noble families, who by their proximity fall in love, and, frustrated by their inability to consummate their desires, plan to meet outside the city during the night. Thisbe arrives first, and is frightened away by a lion, dropping her veil as she runs. The lion mauls and bloodies the veil, and leaves. Pyramus comes later, finds the bloody veil and in despair at losing Thisbe, kills himself. This is the main outline of the story as it is found in Ovid and Gower. Chaucer, who included the tale as the second story in the Legend of

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12 See Norman Callan, " 'Thyn owne book': A note on Gower, Chaucer and Ovid," Review of English Studies, XXIII (1946), 269-281. He briefly discusses Gower's version of the tale with reference to both Chaucer and Ovid. He concludes (p. 270) that "Gower, along with incidental moralizing on the power of love, extracts from the tale [an] . . . ethical admonition against suicide through 'folehaste'. Callan does not discuss the differences in great detail. He finds Chaucer's version preferable to Gower's because of his "felicitous recreation of individual words and lines." His conclusions about the change in theme from Ovid to Gower agree substantially with my analysis.

Good Women,[13] follows Ovid more closely than Gower, to the point of including even the more shocking details from the story, such as the image of Pyramus' blood spouting from his wound as if from a broken water-spout.[14] Both Gower and Chaucer suppress the detail of the transformation of the mulberry tree, which, from the point of view of the pathos of the story and of its movement, was an unnecessary detail in Ovid's version (cf. Works, I, 498). With that exception, however, Chaucer follows Ovid very closely.

Gower's version of the story is more of a paraphrase, retaining the bare outlines but omitting nearly everything superfluous. The similarities are easily enumerated. He retains the setting of the story in the town walled by Semiramis, and, like Ovid, does not identify it as Babylon, as Chaucer does in the opening lines of his version.[15] He retains the birth and growth of their love from their nearness, and their resourcefulness in finding ways of

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13 Ed. F.N. Robinson, Works of Chaucer, pp. 480-518, lines 706-923.

14 LGW 850-852; Metam. IV. 119-123. Cf. Callan, pp. 273-274, and R.W. Frank Jr., Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 47-56.

15 Cf. LGW 705: "At Babiloyne whilom fil it thus" with the Ovide Moralisé, IV. 229: "En Babiloine la cite." There are a number of other parallels between Chaucer and the Ov. Mor., suggesting that he had seen the poem. Aside from the story itself there are no overt resemblances between Gower's version and the Ov. Mor., although this does not preclude the possibility that he knew the work. For further comparison between Chaucer and Ovid see W.W. Skeat, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford, 1894), III, 314-317.

communicating with each other. The plan to meet by night outside the city, and the tearing of the cloak by the lion,[16] and Pyramus' initial action of blaming himself for Thisbe's supposed death, as well as the fact that she kills herself with the same sword that Pyramus uses, are all retained by Gower.

The differences between the versions are more significant.[17] Ovid introduces the names of the lovers in the first line, thus focusing immediate attention on them. He goes to the point of actually addressing the two when describing how they discovered the chink in the wall.[18] His focus is on the lovers, and the story is written entirely from their viewpoint. Even the detail at the end, where Thisbe asks the parents to bury them together and asks the gods to permit their love to be remembered through the darkened mulberry fruits, is presented from Thisbe's point of view. The fact that her requests are carried out ensures that their love will be remembered, and not the grief of the parents, or the generosity and sympathy of the gods.

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16 Gower changes Ovid's lea (lioness) to a lion.

17 A number of details in Ovid retained by Chaucer but not by Gower are noted by Macaulay, Works, I, 498.

18 Cf. Metam. IV. 67-70:
id vitium . . .
. . . primi vidisti amantes
et vocis fecistis iter, tutaeque per illud
murmure blanditiae minimo transire solebant.
Gower's lovers make their own chink in the wall.

Gower retains this focus to a large extent, but adds some significant details, which put the tale in a different perspective. One of these is the nature of their burning desire. Ovid uses a straightforward metaphor, indicating that they burned with love in spite of, or because of, their parents' opposition to their marriage:

> . . . . taedae quoque iure coissent
> sed vetuere patres; quod non potuere vetare,
> ex aequo captis ardebant mentibus ambo.
> . . . . . .
> quoque magis tegitur, tectus magis aestuat ignis.
> (Metam. IV. 60-62, 64)
>
> ( . . . they would have been joined in marriage, too, but their parents forbade. Still, what no parents could forbid, sore smitten in heart they burned with mutual love. . . . the more they covered up the fire, the more it burned.)

Gower retains the mention of the fire, but adds that their love was initiated and furthered by Cupid:

> Cupide hath so the thinges schape,
> That thei ne mihte his hand ascape,
> That he his fyr on hem ne caste:
> (III. 1351-53).

Gower ascribes the fire of their love to the action of Cupid in their affairs, thus strongly emphasizing that their love is beyond their own control, and that their death is due to the capriciousness of the god of love, not to their own impulses. In the larger context of the love allegory, Pyramus and Thisbe find themselves under Cupid's control and thus in the realm of cupiditas, which in their case leads to death. Amans is released from his quest when Cupid removes the dart from his heart, but such is not the fate of Pyramus and Thisbe.

Gower again emphasizes Cupid's control in Thisbe's final speech. In Ovid she addresses Pyramus, and stoically, and with full knowledge of her deed, kills herself. In Gower she addresses the gods of love, recognizing that it was their blind actions which caused Pyramus' death:

> O thou which cleped art Venus,
> Goddesse of love, and thou, Cupide,
> Which loves cause hast forto guide,
> I wot now wel that ye be blinde,
> Of thilke unhapp which now I finde
> Only betwen my love and me.
> (III. 1462-67)

She now realizes the irony of Cupid's role: he is the one who must guide the affairs of love, but his blindness prevents him from being able to carry out this task. She complains of the injustice of Pyramus' death, blaming the gods of love:

> Ye sette oure herte bothe afyre,
> And maden ous such thing desire
> Wherof that we no skile cowthe;
> Bot thus oure freisshe lusti yowthe
> Withoute joie is al despended
> Which thing mai nevere ben amended:
> (III. 1473-78).

She accuses them of taking advantage of their youth and their innocence. Gower thereby retains Ovid's pathos at the tragic waste of young love, but puts it firmly in the context of the blind actions of Cupid and Venus. The connection with the gods of love intensifies the helplessness and feeling of inevitability of a tragic ending to the affair. In Ovid the lovers come to an end through the accidental conjunction of circumstances; in Gower the affair is from its inception deliberately controlled

by the gods of love, thus relating it directly to the love allegory.

A number of details have been omitted by Gower. Some of these are unnecessary and their omission serves to tighten the story, without changing it materially. He omits the speech of the frustrated lovers to the envious wall. In Ovid the wall becomes the symbol of the one thing preventing the lovers from meeting; in Gower the introduction of the illustrious parents at the start of the tale suggests that their unwillingness to permit the two to marry is perhaps partially the result of the social proprieties that need to be observed in such an affair. Gower also omits the reference to the tomb of Ninus as part of the location where the lovers are to meet, which is an unnecessary detail in Ovid, since he has already localized the meeting place by reference to the cool spring nearby.

Gower also omits all reference to the tracks of the lion when Pyramus arrives at the well. Instead he focuses on the blood-spattered veil, and thus achieves a sense of onrushing fate by having Pyramus recognize the veil immediately. The intensity of the grief he exhibits becomes more believable with the sudden shocking awareness of Thisbe's death, and of his loss. Gower also omits Pyramus' long speech to the lion, and to the gods, and replaces it with a mere three line speech:

I am cause of this felonie,
So it is resoun that I die,
As sche is ded be cause of me.
(III. 1431-33).

The rest of his reaction is given in the form of a description by the poet, rather than in Pyramus' own words. This is consistent with the didactic intent for the tale, since Gower can thereby remain in full control of his material. When Pyramus arrives at the well and finds the bloody veil he is momentarily silent. Then Gower moves on to his violent reaction, expressed through a rapid succession of actions, with the lines connected to each other by enjambement enhancing the precipitate advance of the story and of Pyramus' emotions:

Cam nevere yit to mannes Ere
Tidinge, ne to mannes sihte
Merveile, which so sore aflihte
A mannes herte, as it tho dede
To him, which in the same stede
With many a wofull compleignynge
Began his handes forto wringe,
As he which demeth sikerly
That sche be ded: and sodeinly
His swerd al nakid out he breide
In his folhaste, and thus he seide:
(III. 1420-30).

The reference to 'Ere' and 'sihte' recall the opening of the discussion of sin in [redacted] where Genius points out the chief ways in which sin ent[redacted] man's heart. Pyramus' reaction is very natural: the wringing of the hands, the sorrowful complaints, both are echoes of Ovid, but he suggests this action through Pyramus' speech. Gower gives the picture of a man suddenly confronted with a shocking sight, emphasized in an ironic way by the use of the word

'merveile' which is usually reserved for a religious experience, to describe the effect of Thisbe's supposed death on Pyramus. His immediate reaction is to pull out his sword and after a short speech and prayers to the gods, to kill himself. With the words 'sodeinly' and 'folhaste' Gower identifies the reason for telling the tale as an exemplum for 'folhaste' in love. Pyramus' impulsive action is the direct result of his hastiness. Although Gower does not condemn him for this, he shows clearly that his death was not necessary. The introduction of the gods of love as the cause of the lover's ardour increases the feeling that the lovers were somehow on the wrong path, and that the gods of love were connected with their hasty actions.

Gower adds some interesting details to Thisbe's side of the story. When she is on her way to the trysting place he gives a succinct picture of the lonely girl hastening to meet her lover:

> So it befell the nyhtes tide
> This maiden, which desguised was,
> Al prively the softe pas
> Goth thurgh the large toun unknowe.
> (III. 1384-86)

The economy of language gives a breathless picture of the contrast between the large town and the young maiden, disguised so no-one will recognize her, hastening softly through the deserted streets to meet her lover.

Gower also adds more detail to Thisbe hiding from the lion. Ovid merely says that

vidit et obscurum timido pede fugit in antrum,
dumque fugit, tergo velamina lapsa reliquit.
(Metam. IV. 100-101)

(. . . she sees her, and flees with trembling feet into the deep cavern, and as she flees she leaves her cloak on the ground behind her.)

Ovid's description is straightforward, with only the timido pede indicating the measure of Thisbe's fear. Gower adds more to the details of her fear. She flees when she sees the lion, and drops the veil. Then Gower adds:

And Tisbee dorste noght remue,
Bot as a bridd which were in mue
Withinne a buissh sche kept hir clos
So stille that sche noght aros;
Unto hirself and pleigneth aye.
(III. 1411-1415)

Gower emphasizes her condition after her flight, while Ovid is more concerned with her fear immediately upon seeing the lion. Gower's picture of Thisbe, trembling in a bush like a bird in a cage, so fearful that she dare not move or cry out, is a moving vignette of her fear.

Ovid throughout the story emphasizes action. The lovers seek whatever means they can to gain access to each other, the lion's actions are described forcefully, and Pyramus and Thisbe both take decisive action when they think it necessary. Only through their speeches are some of their inner feelings revealed, and even then the emphasis is not so much on their thoughts and feelings as on the action this produces. Gower, on the other hand, is directly concerned with their action, and the reason for the action, changing the details of the story when necessary in order to keep the central theme always before

the reader's eyes.

The theme is very carefully enunciated by Gower when Thisbe returns from her hiding place to find Pyramus dead. In Ovid the movement of the story is broken by the three-line description of how the blood tinged the mulberry bushes. Gower has wisely left out this gruesome and unnecessary detail, and makes a smooth transition from Pyramus' death to her coming:

> And in this wise himself he spilte
> With his folhaste and deth he nam;
> For sche withinne a while cam,
> Wher he lai ded upon his knif.
> (III.1446-49)

Macaulay has punctuated the end of line 1447 with a semicolon, but it seems more effective to replace it with a comma, emphasizing the syntactic continuity between Pyramus' hastiness and Thisbe's arrival. Gower makes it clear that Pyramus ought not to have killed himself so hastily because Thisbe comes only a short while later to find him dead on his sword. He acts too hastily because he would have seen her had he waited; now the very thing he had feared, her death, will ironically take place because of his hasty action. He is so caught up in the web of his Cupid-inspired love that he is incapable of reasonable action. The irony of his situation is the direct result of his involuntary involvement with cupiditas.

There are other differences between Ovid and Gower which are important from an artistic point of view. Gower changes the order of the lion's actions, making him

drink after he tears the veil, so that the bloodstained garment becomes more effective in explaining Pyramus' violent reaction. Gower also changes the details of Thisbe's death, having her commit suicide because her grief has taken away her senses. Gower changes the tale as found in Ovid through the addition and omission of many details. He transforms Ovid's story of the pathetic death of two young lovers into an illustration of the sin of 'folhast' without altering the basic story, or the element of pathos.

As usual Gower places the tale in the framework of Genius' comments, thus setting the moral tone of the tale from the beginning. In the introduction he points out that the ascendance of will over the heart is a thing to be feared in love. He emphasizes, moreover, that love often blinds men and causes them to lose their reason:

> For love is of a wonder kinde,
> And hath his wittes ofte blinde,
> That thei fro mannes reson falle;
> But whan that it is so befalle
> That will schall the corage lede,
> In loves cause it is to drede:
> Wherof I finde ensample write,
> Which is behovely forto wite.
> (III. 1323-30)

The action of love Genius describes here sets the tone for the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe. Cupid, the god of love, causes the young people to fall in love, and whips up their desire to such an extent that they step outside the bound of reason and make a plan to slip away from home to fulfill their desire. Led by the will rather than by reason, Pyramus hastily kills himself to atone for Thisbe's

death, which leads directly to her own demise.

The tale stands as an exemplum for the kind of hasty action that is caused when the will controls the heart. Genius draws a close connection between the general application in the introduction and Pyramus' hasty action in killing himself when he says in conclusion:

> Now thou, mi Sone, hast herd this tale,
> Dewar that of thin oghne bale
> Thou be noght cause in thi folhaste,
> Upon thi thought in aventure,
> Wherof this lyves forfeture
> Mai falle: (III. 1495-1501).

Pyramus' hasty action was the result of being guided by his passions instead of reason. Genius warns Amans not to fall into the same trap, lest he too lose his life.[19]

Gower remains in full control of his source material. He changes many of the details, adds material of his own invention, and omits many things found in Ovid. Nearly all the changes enhance the story when compared with the original.[20] The major alterations illustrate the lack

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19 Cf. Genius' advice to Amans to choose 'love honest' instead of the lustful love he has been pursuing, VIII. 2067 ff.

20 Cf. Macaulay, Works, I, 498: "Gower's rendering of the story is inferior to that of Chaucer, as might be expected. . . ." This comment reflects the bias of the editor. Chaucer's version may be considered better from the viewpoint of the care with which he reproduces his source; but Gower's version is better when considered from the viewpoint of his ability to recreate the story without changing it materially, and suiting it to his own purpose. Gower's version is a recreation, and Chaucer's more of a faithful reproduction.

of reason in cupidinous love, and the fatal effects of permitting reason to fall under the control of the will. The moving force behind the tale is the blind action of love and the foolish haste this causes.

The tale of Pyramus and Thisbe is one of Gower's best adaptations from Ovid (Callan, p. 269). Not all the tales are as well told, but in all cases they have some moral reason for their presence in the Confessio Amantis. More than anything else this is one of the most distinctive features of Gower's art. The tales which are more than mere sketches can be read for their own sake. Set in the context of the love allegory, however, they must also be read in terms of their moral and didactic content. Gower combines an ability to tell a story with great skill, and a clearly defined moral outlook on life, into an artistic unity. Each of the tales illustrates a vice, and yet each can be considered independently, to the extent that the reader tends to forget the moral context while reading the tale, but is pulled back to it at the end of each tale. This quality enhances the "beauties of the architectonics" which C.S. Lewis so greatly admired in the Confessio Amantis (Lewis, p. 201).

The coherence of the poem is broken by the long digression on political philosophy in Book VII, because its subject matter appears to bear no relationship to the love allegory. Fisher contends that it is central to the Confessio Amantis, a view which may be explained

by the heavy emphasis he places on Gower's moral and social views (Fisher, p. 187). Book VII may be seen as an integral, though perhaps not quite so successful, portion of the poem from a dramatic viewpoint, from Gower's moral outlook, and from the viewpoint of thematic unity given by the theme of caritas.

Genius departs from his discussion of the seven sins at Amans' request. The lover has been unable to find happiness in love, and asks the priest to speak to him of the things Aristotle taught Alexander, so that he may forget his 'jolif wo', if only for a time:

> For be reson I wolde wene
> That if I herde of thinges strange,
> Yit for a time it scholde change
> Mi peine, and lisse me somdiel.
> (VI. 2416-19)

Although he indicates that his "herte sore longeth / To wite what it wolde mene" (VI. 2414-15), his primary reason for the request is his desire to forget the pain of love for some time. At the end of the discourse, during which Amans does not once appear, he simply indicates (VII. 5408-20) that Genius' efforts have been of no avail, because they have not achieved their purpose. He asks Genius to return to the main business at hand, the confession:

> Do wey, min fader, I you preie:
> Of that ye have unto me told
> I thonke you a thousendfold.
> The tales sounen in myn Ere,
> Bot yit myn herte is elleswhere
> I mai miselve noght restreigne,
> That I nam evere in loves peine.
> (VII. 5408-17).

The long digression has failed to achieve what Amans had hoped it would: to relieve his heart's pain. There is even a suggestion that he has not heard what Genius has been telling him, but has been thinking of his lady and his unsuccessful love.

Book VII is requested by Amans to assuage his pain for a while. Genius complies with the request for very different reasons, but in keeping with his own intentions. He says to Amans:

> Mi Sone, thou seist wel.
> For wisdom hou that evere it stonde,
> To him that can it understonde
> Doth gret profit in sondri wise;
> (VI. 2420-23)

As priest Genius applauds every opportunity to enlighten his pupil on matters of wisdom. In this vein he makes several short departures from the love allegory to discuss the evils of war (III. 2251-62) and the origin of pagan religions (V. 747-1970). Amans' request gives him another excuse to display his knowledge.

Book VII has some justification from the point of view of the dialogue between Amans and Genius (Schueler, "Comments on the Structure", p. 17). In addition, Gower has integrated it thematically with the poem. The controlling theme of the moral framework and of the confession is the conflict between caritas and cupiditas. This theme also stands at the centre of Book VII. Just as it is the guiding principle behind Gower's selection and shaping of the exempla, so the central principle

involved in Book VII is the opposition of caritas and cupiditas.

Much of Book VII seems superfluous, except within the context of a king's education. The greatest portion of the book is taken up by the five points of Policy, embodying the principal qualities necessary for a good ruler. Fisher sees Justice as the central point of the discussion of policy, and the one most worthy of consideration. He writes:

> . . . it is the third point of Policy, Justice, that most deserves our attention. The 400 lines treating and illustrating this topic represent a climax in Gower's treatment of the themes of law and order —— of the dependence of the common good upon personal virtue, legal restraint, and royal authority. (Fisher, p. 200)

Fisher is guided by his desire to fit the Confessio Amantis into a total pattern evident in Gower's work. Consequently he does not take into account what Gower says of 'pite' or mercy, the fourth point of policy, dismissing it as being anticlimactic. Gower calls it the "pris which preised is algate" (VII. 3104), because through 'pite' the Incarnation took place. Gower considers 'pite' and justice together to be the best possible combination of virtues in a king:

> Is non so good to the plesance
> Of god, as is good governance;
> And every governance is due
> To Pite: thus I mai argue
> That Pite is the foundement
> Of every kinges regiment,
> If it be medled with justice.
> (VII. 4193-99)

'Pite' mixed with justice forms the foundation of good government. Without justice, a king would soon lose the respect of his people, and without 'pite' he would be too unbending, and would lose the support of his people. Only the combination of the two gives the ideal conditions for success.

'Pite' is an integral part of a good king's virtues. By making it a necessary part of justice Gowers sets up a thematic relationship with the rest of the poem. In Book II he writes of 'Pite':

> Ayeine Envie is Charite
> Which is the Moder of Pite,
> That makth a mannes herte tendre,
> (II. 3173-75).

Caritas is the starting point of mercy. Gower reiterates this theme in Book VII:

> For Charite the moder is
> Of Pite, which nothing amis
> Can suffre, if he it mai amende.
> (VII. 3167-69)

These lines establish a direct verbal and thematic link with the rest of the poem, integrating the heart of the instruction in Book VII with the rest of the poem.

The final justification places Book VII in the context of Gower's moral and social concerns. In the Prologue and Epilogue of the poem he discusses at length the problems besetting society. In the Epilogue he proposes an answer to these problems: if caritas would guide men, as it did in the golden age of the world, then peace and harmony would be restored. Book VII is part of Gower's social

concern, where he provides instruction for the king's benefit. In subject matter, theme, and moral basis, the digression is an integral part of the Confessio Amantis, although it is a somewhat clumsy attempt at integration for Gower. As in his exempla, however, he follows the principle of letting his moral concerns form the basis of his writings. From that point of view, Book VII is an integral part of the fabric of the poem.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Confessio Amantis is a long and variegated work. The charge of dullness often levelled against Gower (cf. Fisher, p. 2) is hardly justifiable in the case of his English poem.[1] At times his writing seems pedestrian and repetitive, but that is in part the result of the octosyllabic rhyming couplets which necessitate a certain amount of "filler" lines. The poem is guided by an overriding concern for social and moral values, at the heart of which stands the opposition of caritas and cupiditas. Caritas provides the ideal rejuvenating force, which Gower finds sadly lacking in the present. Cupiditas, self-love at the expense of others, is a moral principle presently guiding society.

The opposition of the two loves gives shape and thematic unity to the poem. In the Prologue and Epilogue, the moral framework, the duality is expressed through a comparison of past and present. It manifests itself in

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1 Cf. Eric Stockton's remarks on the Mirour (Major Latin Works, p. 10): "The poem is a document to be read at most once in one's lifetime. The sheer length and Gower's relentless moral earnestness are impressive but also oppressive." Cf. Fisher, p. 2: "Their dullness cannot be palliated, but it must be recognized for what it is — not failure, but success in its intended genre. . . . complaint."

the love allegory through the opposition of Amans and Genius. In the tales and digressions the presence of one or the other provides a principle by which Gower gives shape to his tales.

The most admirable quality of the Confessio Amantis is not the breath and pervasiveness of the theme, but the tremendous variety to be found in the poem to which the theme of the duality of love gives unity and coherence. At the heart of the diversity, and encompassing all of it, stands the theme of love, with all its paradoxes and failings. Caritas and cupiditas are merely words which express the two general directions love can take; but they are not all-sufficient because the true nature of love escapes inclusive definition.

# APPENDIX

## APPENDIX

### TALES IN THE CONFESSIO AMANTIS BORROWED FROM OVID

The following list gives the Ovidian sources for the tales in the Confessio Amantis. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are tales told by Ovid but changed so drastically that they probably were borrowed elsewhere.

| | |
|---|---|
| Acteon, I. 333-378. | Metam. III. 138-252. |
| Medusa, I. 389-435. | Metam. IV. 772-786. |
| Narcissus, I. 2275-2358. | Metam. III. 402-510. |
| Acis and Galatea, II. 104-199 | Metam. XIII. 750-897. |
| Deianira and Nessus, II. 2145-2307. | Metam. IX. 101-272. |
| Canace and Machaire, III. 143-336. | Heroides, Ep. XI. |
| Tiresias and the Snakes III. 361-380. | Metam. III. 324-327. |
| Jupiter, Juno, and Tiresias III. 736-767. | Metam. III. 316-338. |
| Phebus and Cornide, III. 783-817. | Metam. II. 542-632. |
| Jupiter and Laar, III. 818-830. | Fasti II. 585-616. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Pyramus and Thisbe, III. 1331-1494. | Metam. IV. 55-166. |
| Phebus and Daphne, III. 1685-1720. | Metam. I. 453-567. |
| Eneas and Dido, IV. 77-137. | Heroides, Ep. VII. |
| Pygmaleon and the Statue, IV. 371-436. | Metam. X. 243-297. |
| Iphis, IV. 451-505. | Metam. IX. 666-797. |
| *Demephon and Phillis, IV. 731-878. | Heroides, Ep. II. Remedia Amores 591-664. |
| Phaeton, IV. 979-1034 | Metam. II. 1-324. |
| Icarus, IV. 1035-1071. | Metam. VIII. 183-235. |
| Protesilaus, IV. 1901-1934. | Heroides, Ep. XIII. |
| *Hercules, IV. 2045-2134. | Metam. IX. 31-88. |
| Ceix and Alceone, IV. 3927-3123. | Metam. XI. 266-748. |
| Argus and Mercury, IV. 3317-3361. | Metam. I. 588-723. |
| Iphis and Araxarathen, IV. 3515-3684. | Metam. XIV. 698-761. |
| Midas, V. 141-725. | Metam. XI. 85-147. |
| Vulcan and Venus, V. 635-725. | Ars Amatoriae II. 561-592. |
| Jason and Medea, V. 3247-4222 | Metam. VII. 159-293.[1] |
| Echo, V. 4583-4652. | Metam. III. 359-401. |
| *Theseus and Ariadne, V. 5231-5495. | Metam. VII. 458. Metam. VIII. 1-182. |

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1 The second part (V. 3927-4222) is based on Ovid. The first part follows the account in the Roman de Troie by Benoit. Cf. Macaulay, Works, II. 497, note to V. 3247 ff.

| | |
|---|---|
| Tereus, V. 5551-6047. | Metam. VI. 424-674. |
| Neptune and Cornix, V. 6145-6217. | Metam. II. 569-588. |
| Calistona, V. 6225-6337. | Metam. II. 409-507. |
| Leucothoe, V. 6713-6801. | Metam. IV. 192-255. |
| Hercules and Faunus, V. 6807-6935. | Fasti II. 305-358. |
| Marriage of Pirithous, VI. 485-536. | Metam. XII. 210-535. |
| *Ulysses and Telegonus, VI. 1391-1788. | Metam. XIV. 277-315. |
| Lichaon, VII. 3386. | Metam. I. 221-239. |
| Tarquin and his son Aruns, VII. 4593-4753. | Fasti II. 687-720. |
| Rape of Lucrece, VII. 4754-5130. | Fasti II. 721-853. |

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